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Land, Labour and Population in the Industrial Revolution

Essays presented to J. D. Chambers

edited by

E. L. Jones & G. E. Mingay

Professor J. D. Chambers, the distinguished economic historian, retired from the Chair and Headship of the Department of Economic History in the University of Nottingham in 1964. In this volume of essays dedicated to him the editors have had two aims. First, to produce a book which deals with the period and themes central to the work of Professor Chambers—land, labour and population in England during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This is not only appropriate to a commemorative volume but also gives the book foci of interest. Second, contributions have been invited from former colleagues, students and friends whose work has had some close connexion with Professor Chambers's own, stemming directly or indirectly from his concern with the subjects discussed. The book, a combination of themes and personal association, is worthy of the precedent which Professor Chambers has set and is of considerable value to the serious student of the period.

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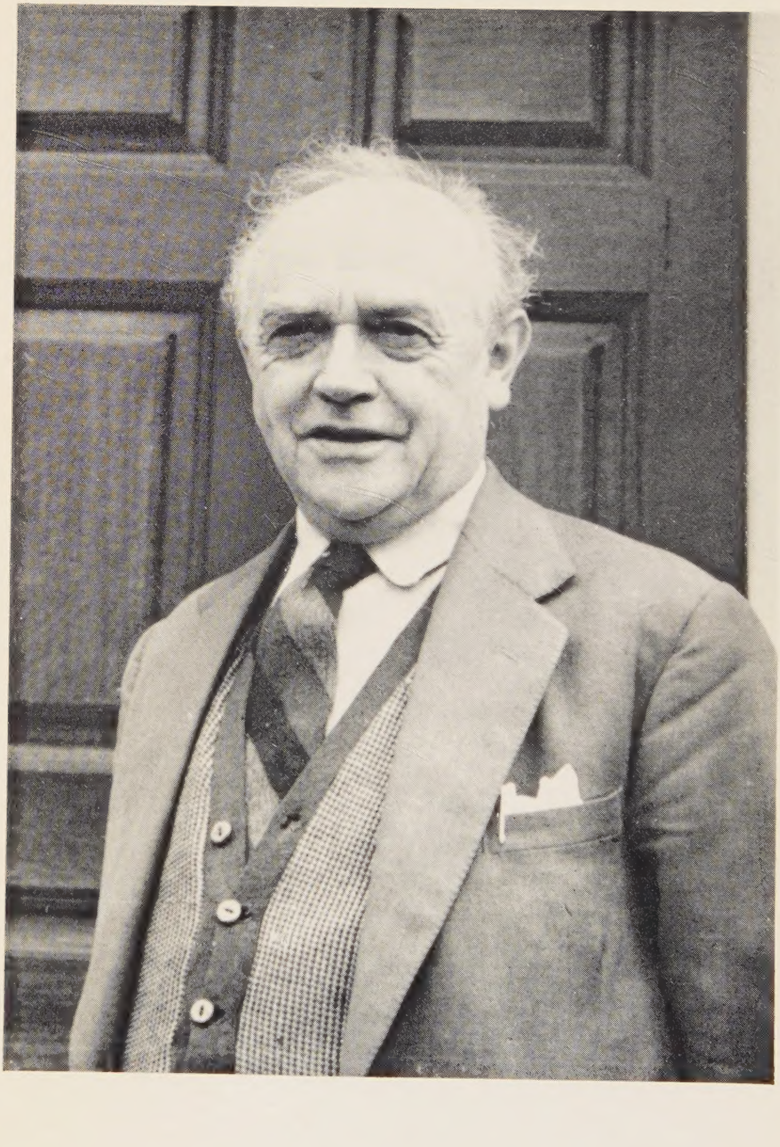
LAND, LABOUR AND POPULATION IN THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION:

ESSAYS PRESENTED TO J. D. CHAMBERS



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© Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd 1967
First published 1967

First published in the United States
in this format, 1968
by Barnes & Noble, Inc.
New York, N.Y.

Printed in Great Britain by
W. & J. Mackay & Co Ltd, Chatham, Kent

Contents

Editors' Note vii

Foreword ix

Biographical Note xiii

Publications of J. D. Chambers xiv

LAND

1 The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward 3
G. E. Mingay, Reader in Economic and Social History, University of Kent at Canterbury

2 Farming in Wartime: 1793–1815 28
A. H. John, Professor of Economic History, The London School of Economics and Political Science

3 Industrial Capital and Landed Investment: the Arkwrights in Herefordshire, 1809–43 48
E. L. Jones, Research Fellow, Nuffield College, Oxford

LABOUR

4 The Ideology of Economic Growth: a Case Study 75
Charles M. Elliott, Reader in Economics, University of Zambia

5 The Classical Economists and the Labourer 100
A. W. Coats, Professor of Economic History, University of Nottingham

6 Gravener Henson and the Making of the English Working Class 131
Roy A. Church, Lecturer in Economic History, University of Birmingham, and S. D. Chapman, Lecturer in Modern Economic and Social History, University of Aston in Birmingham

7 Allotments and the Problem of Rural Poverty, 1780–1840 162
D. C. Barnett

POPULATION

8 Some Aspects of Population Change, 1690–1790 187
J. T. Krause, Professor of History, State University of New York at Buffalo

9 The Home Market and Economic Growth in England, 1750–80 206
D. E. C. Eversley, Reader in Population Studies, University of Sussex

10 Population Growth and Economic Change in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England and Ireland 260
P. E. Razzell, Lecturer in Sociology, Bedford College, University of London.

Editors' Note

In this volume we have attempted to unite two desirable but perhaps not entirely compatible objects. First, we have tried to produce a book which would treat the period and themes central to the work of J. D. Chambers—land, labour, and population in England during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This, we believe, is not only highly appropriate in a commemorative volume but will also give the book foci of interest. Second, we have sought to invite contributions from those former colleagues, students and friends whose work has had some close connexion with Professor Chambers's own, stemming directly or indirectly from his concern with the subjects discussed. To concentrate on the themes of land, labour, and population has unfortunately meant that some former colleagues and students whose work falls outside these topics could not be invited to contribute. However, we hope that we have achieved an acceptable combination of themes and personal association, and that the book is worthy of the precedent which Professor Chambers has set. In that case it must be of value to the serious student of the period.

E. L. JONES
G. E. MINGAY

November 1966

Foreword

J. D. Chambers has always been first and foremost a regional historian, a pioneer in the serious application of regional studies to the general problems of economic development. His name is, of course, inevitably associated with the Vale of Trent and, more particularly, with Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, whose history his writings have done so much to illumine. But readers of this book will also know that, for him, the local minutiae of the regional economy have not been a limiting influence which inhibited consideration of wider problems, but rather formed the base from which he could explore the more certainly and knowledgeably the development of the economy at large. The strength of the regional historian is that through working within clearly defined limits he is able to study his region in the greatest possible detail, and his comprehension of its development is further enhanced by the depth of understanding that only personal contact, sympathy and experience can achieve. The regional historian derives his authority from the closeness of contact—he has walked on the very fields named in the documents, traversed the streets and climbed the stairs of the very buildings. With the confidence provided by this degree of familiarity, he can contrast the regional story with the national experience, noting the differences and assessing the reasons for them. Thus in reference to one of his major fields of interest, the growth of population in the eighteenth century, Professor Chambers himself has written:

> This approach to a common set of problems has advantages and disadvantages. The regional historian is closer to the field of action; he can see, and may know intimately, the places where the events of the story took place; through the proxy of his own not-so-distant ancestors, he may even have participated in them; and since the volume of evidence is on a regional and not a national scale, he can examine, or at least sample, all that is physically accessible. Here lie both the strength and the weakness of the regional approach. Such evidence does not include the data of the movement of trade, or of the money market or of industrial production: on the other hand

> it is most abundant exactly where the resources of national economic history are most deficient, on the demographic side.[1]

In the era before the railway age the region was the natural environment of economic growth. Poverty of national communications gave increased significance to regional means of water transport and to the local availability of natural resources and of labour and capital. The growth of the region was tied in part to the abundance of these resources, and in the Chambers territory, the Vale of Trent, they were sufficient in kind and quantity to make the area one early affected by industrial and agricultural change. Here was a region

> with its resources of agricultural and mineral products forming a basis of exchange between east and west, and its central waterway, the Trent with its tributaries, providing a medium for this exchange and for the *entrepôt* traffic with the outside world. By virtue of its varied resources, topography and geographical position, it reflected most of the contemporary currents of economic change, and it presents the same kinds of questions with which the student of the national economy is confronted, but in a less complex form and in a simpler setting.[2]

The historian of Nottinghamshire in the eighteenth century appreciated that the process of regional change was not discontinuous but stretched back into earlier centuries, and in his first major study he went back to the Dissolution of the Monasteries and the rise to eminence of those families who obtained the monastic lands of the area.[3] Here were soon 'felt the quickening influences which have been described so vividly by Professor Nef . . .', and after the check of the Civil War, 'the first foreshadowing of an industrial society . . . seen in the expansion of coal, iron, lead, and textiles before the end of the century'.

The late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw the period of aristocratic enterprise in the Vale of Trent: the Countess of Shrewsbury with her iron forges and fulling mills, her sales of wood, coal, charcoal, lead, and agricultural produce; the Earl of Shrewsbury, her fourth husband, with smithies, a blast furnace, and manufacture of scythes and sickles; the Willoughbys, with their coal, blast furnaces and forges, glass, and coal tramways; the Duke of Rutland, with his smelting house, and the Earl of Devonshire, with his copper. These together with the noble undertakers of transport improvements, the famous silk mills of Sir Thomas Lombe, and the less-known enterprises of many other gentlemen, took the local economy to the stage where it was ready for the more plebeian Hargreaves, Strutt, and Arkwright. The forces of industrial growth moved forward, impelled by, and perhaps themselves impelling, the increases in population and growth of markets. Physical evidence of that early industrial age still exists, although in rapidly diminishing quantity, and its regional historian has done much to inspire the study and preservation of those relics that still survive. As also with the not far distant open fields of Laxton, he has always taken the greatest pleasure in revealing to the uninitiated the remarkable scale and complexity of these memorials of the past: the impressive dams, channels, and mill races which still provide power for the modern machinery now at work inside the solid structures—structures that evidently borrowed some elegance from the Georgian house; and near by the homes of the first generation of mill hands, rows of tall three-storied cottages, still lived in, still sound, and not unpleasing in appearance.

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[1] 'The Vale of Trent', Supplement No. 3 to the *Economic History Review*, p. 2.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[3] *Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century* (1932, new ed. 1966), pp. 4–5.

The Vale of Trent was thus one of the principal cradles of industrial growth, but the interests of its historian have lain chiefly not in the changing processes, techniques or scale of production, but in the larger evolution from an agricultural to an urbanized industrial society, and the part played in this by both natural and institutional forces—by the growth of population and the decline of the old hand trades, by the reorganization of agriculture under the twin pressures of population growth and industrial demands, and by the operation of the poor laws. If two words could sum up the main themes of Professor Chambers's work they would be *population* and *enclosure*, typifying the natural and institutional factors whose interrelationships were explored in *Enclosure and Labour Supply in the Industrial Revolution*. The continuing concern with the forces of growth may be detected in all his work, from the early studies of the framework knitters and the agrarian economy of Nottinghamshire to the account of *Population Change in a Provincial Town: Nottingham 1700–1800* and the discussion of *Industrialization as a factor in Economic Growth in England* in the Papers of the First International Conference of Economic History at Stockholm. It may be seen, too, in the more recent study of rural industry for the Second Conference at Aix, and the broader but compact *Workshop of the World*, and it may even be discerned in the never-failing interest in the mechanism of the surviving open fields of Laxton—an outstanding case of arrested agrarian development.

The theme of industrialization is related also to the contemporary social and economic ideas of the classical economists and of Marx—the bridging of the world of theory to that of historical fact—an element that, of course, lay behind the study of population growth and labour supply. But in Chambers's writing, theory and abstraction have always been secondary. The history he has written and taught has been essentially human and vital. To him, industrialization, agricultural change, population growth, and the rest are not abstract and impersonal forces reacting only to markets and profit motives: they have concerned people, real people, industrialists, country gentry, merchants, and lesser folk, whose individual enterprise—and irrationalities—may in the end throw as much light on the process of change as any amount of dry statistics. It is this, together with an unbounded and famous enthusiasm and energy, that have brought the subject alive in his hands, making him a great teacher as well as scholar, and the inspiration of the postwar generation of Nottingham students now teaching up and down the country. Only those readers who, like ourselves, had the privilege of studying or working with him can know fully what we mean.

J. D. Chambers

Jonathan David Chambers was born on 13 October 1898, the son of a small farmer near Eastwood, Nottinghamshire. He was educated at the Mundella Secondary School and University College, Nottingham, taking his B.A. in 1919, and his Ph.D. in 1927. His early years of teaching were spent in the University Department of Adult Education, where he became Assistant Director. During the Second World War he combined continued part-time work in Adult Education with sixth-form teaching at the Grammar School, Ashby-de-la-Zouch. In 1947 he returned to the University of Nottingham as Lecturer and Head of the Sub-Department of Economic History, and subsequently became Reader and then, in 1958, Professor of Economic History—the first to hold the title in the University. He retired from the Chair and Headship of the Department of Economic History in 1964.

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LAND

G. E. Mingay

1 The Eighteenth-Century Land Steward[1]

I

By the eighteenth century the accumulation of landed property in the hands of the aristocracy and wealthy gentry had long created a demand for full-time expert estate managers, men who could take the burden of detailed administration from the shoulders of the proprietor and set him free to devote most of his time to the affairs of state or the pleasures of society. The great estate was really a complex of enterprises which in addition to the various branches of agriculture frequently embraced timber production, mining, quarrying, ironworks, transport undertakings, urban housing development, and miscellaneous industrial works. It represented, consequently, one of the largest concentrations of capital and productive capacity that the age could show, and its control, administration, and expansion was correspondingly a responsibility calling for both managerial capacity and a wide range of technical knowledge and experience.

The steward of a large estate might easily have as much as thirty or forty thousand pounds pass through his hands each year—a sum which would be far larger, of course, in the money of today—and he might have charge of land and other properties worth over a million pounds. We need not go as far as the contemporary writers on estate management who claimed that no steward ought to be employed before he had acquired the experience of middle age, or before he had a thorough

[1] I am greatly indebted to Professor Ray Kelch of California State University for valuable suggestions and for references from the Chandos Letter Books in the Henry E. Huntington Library.

knowledge of every type of rural undertaking—including the culture of wastes and timber, methods of irrigation, drainage, embanking, building of canals, laying-out and repair of roads, construction of bridges, mills and engines, rural architecture, and so forth—as well as a command of economics, statistics, accounting, banking, and many other desirable branches of knowledge.[1] Such omni-competent paragons never existed, and landlords had to make do with less-accomplished mortals.

Large estates, those from several thousand acres upwards, required the services of a full-time steward. A very big property extending to as much as forty or fifty thousand acres, with several hundred tenants, warranted the employment of a full-time steward and a clerk, together with part-time under-stewards and occasional assistance from specialist surveyors and solicitors. It was not merely the extent of an estate that made necessary a staff of this size: the acres of most great estates were both broad and scattered, made up as they were of haphazard accumulations of property, accidentally brought together under one man's control by the fortunes of marriage and inheritance, and as a result frequently distributed over a number of widely separated counties. Types of farming and conditions of tenure varied considerably from one area to another, of course, and added to the complications of managing such an estate. Moreover, the preceding centuries had seen some rise in standards of administration, with the employment of professional surveyors and the keeping of more adequate accounts. Management had become more thorough and 'scientific', so that greater care was taken to see that the land was farmed as profitably as possible, and that timber and minerals were exploited so as to yield the highest revenue. Wherever natural resources permitted, coal seams and other minerals were mined, and blast furnaces, iron manufacturing, quarries, lime-kilns, and brick-kilns were established, so that in the eighteenth century and for long after stewards were expected to understand the operation of these concerns as well as the various regionally diverse forms of husbandry. And as estates developed their resources, so it was necessary to undertake road improvements and look into the advantages of river navigations and canals. It was not therefore merely by chance that some land stewards branched out as entrepreneurs on their own account and often built up important industrial concerns. They had the requisite knowledge, experience, and also, probably, the capital, in an age when such advantages were scarce. Nor was it surprising in these circumstances that early methods of industrial management were borrowed from the great estate, or were strongly influenced by its practices.[1]

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[1] J. Lawrence, *The Modern Land Steward* (1801), pp. 43–44. See also, E. Laurence, *The Duty of a Steward to his Lord* (1727), and W. Marshall, *On the Landed Property of England* (1804).

Smaller landowners usually acted as their own stewards, frequently tackling the work with enthusiasm and sometimes achieving a higher degree of efficiency than even the professional steward could attain. Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell, a Berkshire owner of this sort, arranged his own leases and gave much thought to the covenants they should contain. As early as the 1740s he had his leases printed ready for use, with blank spaces left for writing in the tenant's name and the rent and other details. His leases contained a number of the accepted covenants governing husbandry, the care of farm buildings, landlord's right of entry to the premises and so forth, but there were also some less usual ones which experience showed to be necessary. There was, for instance, a clause enjoining tenants to reside continually in the farmhouse (a precaution against subletting and neglect of the premises, as might occur when farms were engrossed); and another prohibited tenants from selling ale and spirits, a practice not uncommon among farmers, but unpopular with their landlords. And as each year's crop of incidents and disputes suggested new covenants he noted them down in a memorandum book for inclusion in future leases.[2]

Some owners of small estates found it necessary to employ a steward, either because their property was scattered and they did not wish to be troubled with the detailed management of it, or perhaps because business activities or attendance at Westminster made inevitable long absences from the estate. The Best family, for example, the largest brewers in Chatham, had a small landed estate in Suffolk. The rents were collected by a local attorney, but the general supervision was in the hands of a relation, Edward Vernon (subsequently Admiral Vernon), who conveniently enough was farming in the neighbouring county of Essex.[3]

However, the work of part-time management was usually undertaken by local farmers or attorneys, who for a commission of sixpence or a shilling in the pound collected rents, supervised repairs, found new tenants when farms fell vacant, and saw that the farmers honoured their covenants. Sometimes, instead of working on commission they were paid a small salary, together with their travelling expenses and board and lodging. Nathaniel Chapman, described as a yeoman of Dorset, was paid £12 a year in the late seventeenth century to supervise Sir William Drake's far-flung properties in Buckinghamshire, Kent, Leicestershire and Cheshire.[1] Another Kentish owner, Sir Jacob Bouverie, had a number of farms near Folkestone, but as a gentleman of wide interests, and a Member of Parliament also, he rarely found time to visit his property and employed a Folkestone man, Henry Barton, to manage it. Despite the obstacle of distance, Sir Jacob kept a firm grip on affairs, and he constantly inquired into the progress of disputes and the state of work in hand, and he invariably had the final word in the assessment of rents and choice of tenants.[2] Similarly, a Suffolk owner, Dudley North, employed a local coal merchant to look after some of his property and keep him in touch with local affairs while he was away at Westminster.[3]

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[1] See S. Pollard, *The Genesis of Modern Management* (1965), pp. 28–30.

[2] Berks, R.O.: D/EPB E4.

[3] Kent R.O.: Best MSS. U 480 E7.

Nevertheless, the oversight of a substantial and valuable estate did require at least some acquaintance with agricultural practice, together with administrative ability and a knowledge of accountancy, and not least, perhaps, of the laws affecting property. It required a man of energy and self-confidence, one capable of holding his own with all kinds and conditions of men, from rival proprietors of rank down to the miserable squatters on the waste lands. Nor must he quail at the prospect of distraining upon and evicting some brawny and possibly foul-mouthed farmer. Farmers, we know, were not always the easiest men to deal with—one on the Audley End estates in Essex persistently paid his rent in arrear, it was noted in the accounts, because of a 'morose temper'. Sometimes the difficulties proved too much. The steward of some Hardwicke properties proposed to give up his post, for, he said, 'the ditches and some other things are out of repair, and the Tennants alwais grumbling, and I don't care to make my life uneasy in my old age'.[4]

The steward had also to be a hardy man; he was usually expected to undertake regular tours of inspection round the properties, to examine the land and buildings, hear complaints, attend at the courts leet and baron, and see how well the local under-steward was doing his job.

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[1] G. Eland (ed.), *Shardeloes Papers of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1947), p. 56.

[2] See G. E. Mingay, 'Estate Management in Eighteenth Century Kent', *Agricultural History Review*, IV, 2 (1956).

[3] E. Suffolk R.O.: North MSS. 331.

[4] Essex R.O.: D/DP E 68; Glos. R.O.: D. 214 E 18.

This meant much riding about on horseback in all sorts of weather, and on roads which in clay districts were likely to be sloughs of mud once one got off the properly made turnpikes. Even in summer the roads could be 'almost impassable'—the plea of Dudley North's steward when excusing himself from attending a meeting.[1] How atrocious country travel often was we can gather from the protests of Arthur Young, himself a one-time steward and an inveterate rural tourist with extensive personal experience of the ruts and mire of the deep countryside. Undoubtedly many stewards were overworked and underpaid, and others lazy and inefficient, whilst their masters were often suspicious and hard to please. Sir Jacob Bouverie complained that his instructions were ignored, his work neglected, and his accounts delayed, and he invariably concluded his letters with a strict injunction to his steward to 'expedite my concerns' or 'transact honestly and diligently all my affairs'. For the conscientious steward the complexities and uncertainties of the work made estate management a thankless career, even without the foibles of an impatient or eccentric employer. But the most unfortunate eighteenth-century steward, no doubt, was the agent of the fourth Earl Ferrers. He was mortally wounded by his employer, a dipsomaniac, who was besieged and arrested in his Leicestershire house by a crowd of local inhabitants, and met his end at Tyburn.

2

Stewards were recruited from a wide field—lawyers, farmers, merchants, ironmasters, army officers (the Duke of Chandos employed two of these as stewards), senior domestic servants—almost any persons sufficiently well known and respectable to inspire confidence as to their honesty and ability. They were essentially middle class, however, since education and some financial standing were requisites for the post. Stewards had to be able to keep accounts and deal with correspondence, and they were often required to pledge a considerable sum as security for the rents they collected: in 1768, for instance, the steward of the Myddleton estates was bound in the sum of £3,000 for the proper performance of his duties.[2] The sons of stewards, if they did not follow their fathers, entered farming, business or the professions. Sir George

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[1] E. Sussex R.O.: North MSS. 331.

[2] N. L. W. Chirk Castle MS. 11826.

Savile's steward had one son apprenticed to a merchant and had another at Cambridge preparing to enter the Church.[1]

But, as we might expect, most stewards were lawyers or farmers, the younger sons of country gentlemen or yeomen farmers. Lawyers were in demand as stewards, since much estate work was governed by precedents and custom, legal disputes were frequent, and questions often arose concerning old types of tenure and ancient laws affecting the land. The agricultural writers of the time, however, had a prejudice against lawyers and warned landowners against them. The main objection was that men of the law were 'not skilled in husbandry' and were often averse to making agricultural improvements. But some attorneys, it might be noted, had been bred up on a farm, kept farms themselves and were keenly interested in agriculture.[2]

With the growth of large estates and greater responsibilities there were signs of estate management becoming a more close profession. A good reputation and the recommendation of a well-known proprietor were, of course, always of the first importance to an aspiring steward. It was not easy for outsiders to break in, and the professional expertise, if not the post itself, was often handed down from father to son. The steward often served one family for the whole of his life, and he formed an essential element of continuity in the administration of a property. Two generations of Pennystones, an old Essex Quaker family, were stewards at Audley End for most of the century; and the elder Pennystone provided the vital link which successfully carried the administration through a partition of the estates and a complete change of ownership which occurred in 1748.[3] By the later eighteenth century land stewardship was in course of becoming a recognized profession with its own distinct body of knowledge and skills. There was some tendency for estate attorneys and solicitors to be superseded by specialist land agents and surveyors, although lawyers remained well entrenched in the field, either as full-time stewards or in the form of country solicitors managing small properties on behalf of distant landlords. Even when lawyers were in command, professional surveyors and agents were frequently called in to undertake the valuation, sale, and purchase of land, and reassessments of rents.

As yet there was no recognized system of professional training apart from the hard school of experience, although leading contemporary experts, such as Thomas Stone and William Marshall, put forward some suggestions. Stone advocated a training based on the farming of the most advanced counties—Norfolk, Hertfordshire, and Essex—the course to lead to an examination to be held by the new Board of Agriculture, a voluntary body of landowners interested in agricultural reform, which was formed in 1793 with Government support. Marshall, and an earlier writer, Edward Laurence, made no specific proposals of this kind, but strongly advised landowners themselves to undertake the training of stewards. They should pick out farmers' sons of promise, and see that they received a good education, which ought to include a study of accounting.[1]

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[1] Notts. R.O.: DD SR 211/2.

[2] See R. Robson, *The Attorney in Eighteenth-Century England* (1959), pp. 84–96.

[3] W. Addison, *Audley End* (1953), pp. 83, 171.

Some expert estate managers came to acquire a national reputation and were in a position to dictate their own terms. Nathaniel Kent, for instance, achieved a wide reputation as a result of his successful book, *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* (1775), and he was one of the experts invited by the Board of Agriculture to write the well-known county surveys of English agriculture. With two partners, Claridge and Pearce, who were also county surveyors for the Board, Kent established a firm of land agents with an office in London. An idea of the work performed and the fees charged by this early specialist venture in estate management can be gathered from the terms of Kent's agreement in 1788 with the Drake family. For general supervision of the scattered Drake estates he was to receive an annual fee of a hundred pounds—less than 1 per cent of the rental; and this fee included the auditing of the accounts and superintendence of the local under-stewards, as well as the undertaking of negotiations over leases, contracts, sales and purchases. There was a strict understanding, however, that all the business was to be carried out at Kent's office or at the Drake house in London. If any journeys were necessary there was to be an additional fee of a guinea a day and expenses.[2]

The remuneration of full-time stewards of large estates was for the period substantial, and must have placed them amongst the highest-paid business executives in the country. Early in the century so large a salary as £400 a year was exceptional, reserved for stewards of the largest estates; but £400 was, of course, a very respectable sum, and as a modern writer has pointed out, was equal to the remuneration of the newly created professorships in modern history at Oxford and

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[1] Marshall, *op. cit.*, p. 349; Laurence, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[2] G. Eland (ed.), *Shardeloes Papers of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (1947), pp. 68–69.

Cambridge.[1] Much more common were salaries of between £50 and £250, according to the work involved, and some owners paid a fee related to the rental, perhaps 2 per cent or 6d. in the pound. The Duke of Chandos, however, paid a commission that rose with the amount collected:

> and the proposal I make you, is to allow you in lieu of all other demands . . . the following Sum, vizt., As the half yearly rental of my Estate is, as I take it, about £548 each half year, for the first £200 you shall receive 18d in the pound, for the next £100—2s in the P'd and for whatever you shall collect above that Sum 2s 6d in the pound; so that supposing you were to receive £450 in any half year, the profit thereon to yourself for the first £200—£15; the next £100—£10; and the last £150—£18. 5s, which is an encouragement so large that I believe no body will be found who gives more out of such an estate.[2]

Subsequently salaries improved considerably; the salary of the Duke of Bedford's 'agent-in-chief' was raised from £300 to £700 in 1732, and by the end of the century the Duke of Devonshire's agent was being paid as much as a thousand pounds.[3] But these two posts, of course, were at the very top of the profession, and the general run of steward's salaries was considerably more modest. Many quite important estates were still managed on a part-time or perhaps near full-time basis by a member of the local gentry or by a farmer of means and experience. The Margam estates in Glamorgan, for example, were managed over a period of a century or more by the Llewellyn family, who became considerable owners in their own right, and in 1798 Griffith Llewellyn, Gent., was appointed to the stewardship of these estates and constable of the Talbot family's Castle of Kenfig at a salary of £230.[4]

The salaries offered were not always enough to induce substantial farmers to give up their farms, although to some farmers the assurance of a certain income must have looked attractive when crops failed or prices fell disastrously. When a farmer did accept a steward's post he sometimes found the duties unexpectedly onerous, and was likely to make an early return to the care of his own acres. In this connexion the story of Thomas Marchant, a yeoman farmer of Hurstpierpoint, is interesting. In 1721 Marchant was offered £100 a year and a house to become steward to the Duke of Somerset. For a long time he hesitated over the matter, and negotiations dragged on desultorily until 1727, when he eventually agreed to take the post, on condition that a horse was provided for him from the Duke's stables, and that he should not be required to journey more than six miles from home. The Duke, however, proved an unaccommodating employer—on one occasion Marchant waited on him three days before obtaining an interview—and the Duke's servants showed hostility to the new-comer and openly schemed to displace him. As the final straw, his wife took a dislike to the house provided by the Duke, and so in the circumstances it was not very surprising that Marchant soon surrendered the appointment.[1]

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[1] E. Hughes, 'The Eighteenth Century Estate Agent', in *Essays in Honour of James Eadie Todd* (1949), p. 192.

[2] Chandos Letter Books: Chandos-Griffith, 14 July 1741.

[3] G. Scott Thomson, *The Russells in Bloomsbury* (1940), p. 210; Hughes, *loc. cit.*, p. 193.

[4] Glamorgan R.O.: D/DLl.

It was quite common for a salaried steward to receive additional fees as brokerage in respect of important transactions such as the sale of a property or the negotiation of a valuable lease. These fees might be calculated at 1 per cent of the sum involved, and would occasionally bring the steward a windfall as large as his annual salary. Stewards often also enjoyed the tenancy of a farm on very lenient terms and managed it in their spare time as a profitable sideline. In addition some received a free house or lived in one of the proprietor's mansions rent free, looking after it and keeping charge of the servants when their employer was absent. For an unscrupulous steward there were many opportunities of making extra money—by showing undue favour to tenants in letting farms, for instance, by turning a blind eye to breaches of covenants, and by falsifying the accounts. Traditional dues still specified in some old rentals were sometimes regarded as customary and legitimate perquisites: these included, for example, the cash payments made by tenants in lieu of a gift of capons or for the excusing of 'boon works', i.e. special tasks such as the carriage of produce supposed to be carried out for the landlord at harvest-time. But stewards were also suspected of indulging in 'new-invented perquisites', of keeping back the landlord's money for their own purposes, of failing to present the accounts for inspection, and of overcharging for produce supplied to the house.[2] The 'arts of stewards' was a synonym for dishonesty and corruption. It must be said, however, that many stewards, perhaps the great majority of them, were honest and faithful in their duties; and

[1] E. Turner, 'The Marchant Diary', *Sussex Arch. Coll.*, XXV (Lewes, 1873), pp. 188, 193–7.

[2] Eaton Hall: Grosvenor MSS.

where they were not the fault often lay, at least in part, with the proprietor who neglected to examine his accounts and to inspect his property.

With their salaries, fees, and perquisites, some stewards prospered, perhaps accumulating in the course of a lifetime a respectable fortune of several thousand pounds.[1] But as they were frequently professional men, modest landowners or large farmers to begin with, and often continued to run a farm after assuming a stewardship, it is hard to say how far their success was due to their steward's office. However, Thomas Pennystone, who succeeded his father as steward of the Audley End estates, was certainly one of those who accumulated by prudent and honourable means a goodly fortune in land and money during his fifty years of office which ended with his death in 1802.[2] Land stewards were able to take advantage of their position and specialized knowledge; and sometimes built up a small estate of their own. In this way both Isaac Greene of Prescot near Liverpool and the Bill family of Staffordshire rose from yeoman origins to the level of minor gentry.[3]

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In the majority of cases their money was well earned. High standards of care and supervision were expected, together with comprehensive and accurate book-keeping. The 'Rules and Instrucions humbly proposed by Wm. Phillips for the Regular management of the Margam Estate the 29 of March 1711' ran to twenty-one separate regulations and four pages of foolscap. And where a part-time steward combined his own business with that of his landlord there was no doubt which must come first. Thus Lord Mansel instructed a newly appointed steward:

> You are to live in my house as a menial servant and to doe all manner of business for me that I think proper to be done by a Steward or an attorney . . . you are to keep all accounts in bound books in such manner that I may see a state of my affairs any day or hour I please . . . you are to account with me half yearly . . . you

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[1] See C. H. C. and M. I. Baker, *The Life and Circumstances of James Brydges, First Duke of Chandos* (Oxford, 1949), pp. 173–4.

[2] Addison, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

[3] R. Stewart-Browne, *Isaac Greene* (1921), pp. 18, 23, 26; Staffs. R.O.: Bill MSS. D 554.

> shall be at liberty to practise as far as is consistent with my service but by no means so enlarge your practice as to take off your attention and application to the affairs of your stewardshipp . . .[1]

Apart from their normal duties of managing the estates, stewards often supervised a home farm and looked after the gardens and plantations about the house, as well as undertaking a host of miscellaneous duties. Sometimes the land steward also assumed the functions of house steward and was in charge of the servants and domestic arrangements in the house. These duties called for much tact and patience: servants seem at all times to have been endowed with an undue portion of sensitivity, and in the eighteenth century they were certainly no less liable to take offence or show a propensity to quarrel. Fire precautions in the family mansion—the provision of fire-buckets and escape ladders—were sometimes a responsibility of the steward, and he also made arrangements for fire insurance. Already by 1776 English houses were insured against fire for a total of about fifty million pounds, and early-established insurance companies, such as the *Sun*, the *Royal Exchange*, and the *London Assurance*, had by then been in operation for over half a century. Stewards were expected to send poultry, garden produce, and other provisions up to London when their employers were in town, to keep an eye on local affairs and any event which might affect the estate—one steward was dismissed for failing to intervene in a riot—and even on occasion to look out for a suitable match for an unmarried daughter. Local gossip was assiduously retailed, even when it embarrassed the steward himself. 'I have Nothing Materiall to tell you,' wrote a steward, 'Butt the Parsons Servt. is brought to bed of a Bastard Child and they say she intends to Lay it to my Bro. John so that I am likely to have Trouble Enough . . .'[2]

Care must be taken that no favours or liberties were allowed to anyone outside the estate, unless he were true to the proprietor's 'interest'. Thus a Suffolk steward wrote to his employer:

> Yesterday Mr. Wall of Blacksill came with his cart for 1000 White Bricks . . . I was unwilling to Deliver them (But I found he was a person of a honest principle and true to Your Interest) I let him have 500 with a promise that he should have 500 more if they could be spared.[3]

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[1] Glamorgan R.O.: D/DP 864; N. L. W.: Morgan MSS. 6007.

[2] Glos. R.O.: D 1447 (1746).

[3] E. Suffolk R.O.: North Letters 331 (1720).

Some landowners employed their stewards as election agents and sent them round the countryside to canvass the tenants, inform them of the direction in which their best political interests lay, and seek the support of the local gentry and independent freeholders. Political control of the farmers was not complete, however, and on one occasion the Duke of Chandos found it necessary to take reprisals against the independent spirit of one of his bailiffs or under-stewards:

> But I would not have this bargain made with the present Bayliff Mr. Bridges, being desirous to have nothing more to do with one, upon whom, tho a tenant and my bailiff I could not prevail for a vote at the Election without buying it, which is such an instance of a corrupt nature, other than of principle, that renders him in my opinion not fit to be trusted anymore, and therefore I desire you'll endeavour to find somebody else to let those rents to, that I may be rid of having anything to do with such a fellow.[1]

There was much to do in entertaining electors and making sure they got to the polls, and success on the day was followed by further merry-making. Thomas Cromp, the Duke of Kingston's steward, was engaged in a hectic election campaign in 1732, and at its conclusion he wrote from Nottingham to report the result of the poll and the subsequent celebrations:

> The Election being ended yesterday all very fairly and amicably and Mr. Bennett and Mr. Levinz returned . . . Mr. Cole carried in some friends of his Grace's Interest and dined them at the Black-more's Head, the great Company were all at the White Lyon. Dr. Tyrconnell and Lord How made out of Town on each side of Mr. Bennett, and both Parties went from the Lings to meet Lord Midleton, who roared strenuously, 'A Bennett, A Levinz for ever'.[2]

Stewards were often important in the administration of the poor laws, and took part in arranging the removal of vagrants, and in seeing that potential paupers did not obtain a right to relief in any of their employer's parishes. Stewards sometimes sat as justices, and supervised the work of surveyors of the highways and other local matters. Their advice was often sought, and they were called in as a knowledgeable and influential third party to settle disputes. With the swelling of population and the growth of towns of all kinds, proprietors found that some of their land might be profitably developed as building sites. Bath and Brighton, Bloomsbury and the West End of London immediately spring to mind, but everywhere urban growth was noticeable. Where new buildings were erected it was quite common for the steward to undertake general supervision and act as clerk of works.[1] Difficulties with builders were apparently as common then as now: 'Wee can hardly Gett People to Work Wholly for one Master tho wee pay as well . . . as many People in England', wrote a despairing steward.[2] Frequently the owner found it convenient to lease the land to a builder, but restrictions were then imposed on the type of house to be erected, and control of the estate as a whole was maintained through the conditions laid down in the leases. Sometimes the owner himself assumed the role of speculative builder, and instructed his steward to supervise the building operations. Robert Andrews, who was a lawyer and steward of the Grosvenor family, was in charge of the laying-out and general management of the Grosvenor estate erected between Oxford Street and Park Lane.[3]

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[1] Chandos Letter Books, Brydges—Woodhouse, 15 Apr. 1715.

[2] Lincs. R.O.: Monson S.C. XVI, p. 159.

The general acceleration of economic life and the expansion of the economy, which were such remarkable features of the eighteenth century, involved, of course, a great development of communications. As a consequence, land stewards were engaged in the promotion of trusts to establish new turnpike roads, or were involved in the formation of river navigation and canal companies. Later on, in the early nineteenth century, landowners and their stewards were prominent in the construction of local railway lines, especially in areas where alternative means of transport for heavy and bulky commodities were lacking. The early railways, indeed, could be traced back to the wagon tracks which had long been in use for moving coal from the pit-heads to near-by river or canal wharves, and landowners' interest in railways often sprang from the need to improve the outlets for their coal-mines. Another sign of the times was the use in the later eighteenth century of steam-engines for draining marshy lands, and one Lincolnshire proprietor had an engine working the marshlands near Skegness as early as 1760.[4]

When an estate changed hands, or came under the control of guardians or trustees, the old-established steward's intimate knowledge of the property was, of course, invaluable. At the same time, the change in the control of the estate was likely to occasion a close scrutiny of the steward's work and character. Although as a result some shortcomings might be revealed, the complexity of estate affairs often made it essential to retain an unsatisfactory steward's services. For instance, when the Audley End estates were broken up in 1748 a Colonel Vachell, who supervised the partition of the property on behalf of the new owners, took care to inquire into the character of Mr. Pennystone, the steward. The colonel wrote to tell Lady Portsmouth that from all reports the steward was 'a judicious man in country affairs'; he was a man of substance, and honest, too, although, as the colonel said, he might well 'suck some honey from lands in hand; and where to find a man that will not is beyond my skill'. In any case the new owners had no choice but to retain him: 'your ladyship sees there is an absolute necessity that there must be a steward'.[1]

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[1] See, for example, E. M. Jancey, 'An Eighteenth Century Estate Steward and his Work', *Trans. Shrops. Arch. Soc.*, LVI (1957–8), pp. 43–44.

[2] Kent R.O.: U 480 E 72 (1739).

[3] Sir J. Summerson, *Georgian London* (1945), p. 86.

[4] Lincs. R.O.: Monson 11/23.

A change of ownership greatly increased the duties and responsibilities of a steward. There were all the affairs of the former proprietor to put in order, his bills to settle, and legacies and pensions to pay. The sudden financial demands might involve the sale of land or stocks, and the requirements of the widow's jointure and daughters' portions might involve rearrangement of the estate revenue and a reorganization of the accounts. The executors, guardians, or trustees were there to hurry things along, and they often played the role of the new broom, sweeping into every nook and cranny of the estates and giving the whole organization a vigorous spring clean.

This was the situation when the extensive and scattered Kingston estates came into the hands of guardians in 1726 on the death of the first Duke. The Duke's affairs were in considerable disorder, and the Kingston guardians not only entered into complicated financial arrangements but also set about reorganizing the administration and improving the estate properties. The reorganization involved making a number of small sales and purchases of land, the dismissal of inefficient under-stewards, and a general revision of rents and tenancies. In all this the guardians leaned heavily on the steward, Thomas Cromp, who was in attendance at their daily meetings. Cromp rented an office in Berkeley Street, and for an outlay of £93 fitted it up with suitable furniture, bought stationery, and hired a man to safeguard the 'writings and Books and Accompts in case of Fire'.

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[1] Addison, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

The guardians' control of the Kingston estates kept Cromp very busy for several years. It was inevitable that on occasion he fell behind in the work, and felt himself unjustly criticized. 'If I were to gain a Thousand Pounds by getting the Accounts ready, I cannot do more than I do', Cromp wrote resentfully to Lord Monson, the head of the guardians. 'I visit nobody, I see nobody, nor do any business but his Grace's. I do it, quite unthanked by them and not at all considered by anybody . . . I am my Lord', he remarked, 'a piece of a Welshman, whose Character by Caesar was they would die for Praise, which makes me perhaps more jealous of a Slight . . .'[1]

After a few years of the vigorous new régime, Cromp evidently thought he was justified in pressing for an increase in salary. His duties were arduous, and he incurred heavy personal expenses in travelling round the estates. In 1730, and again in the following year, he wrote to Lord Monson on this subject:

> The Journeys and frequent change of place are so expensive that I have not a sixpence in the Earth of my Lord Duke's money after Ten Years' Service, which I might have mended by many means practised often without blame . . . I assure your Lordship that all my Lord allows me will not keep my own entire, and yet I am not extravagant. I am sure 'tis hard if in twelve of the best years of my life I cannot say I have £50 spare of my Salarys and Allowances, yet to get that I neglect my own affairs shamefully, and run about from place to place like a Vagabond in great Expenses on the Road, and not much less at his Grace's houses, where more Tenants and people on business are fed than were in my Lord's time, because more business is done . . .

Prior to the guardians assuming control of the estates in 1726, Cromp's salary was £220 a year and board, and when staying at any of the Duke's houses he had 'whatever the Cellars afforded and a Table without any Stint'. His clerk, as befitting his lower status, had his board at the pantry table. When travelling, Cromp was allowed certain expenses and was entitled to have a servant and a horse free of charge. Although at no time had he been able to live within his income, he told the guardians, yet he never sought to increase his means by any dubious method:

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[1] Nottingham University: Manvers Colln., Kingston Executors' Accts.; Lincs. R.O.: Monson S.C. XIV, XVI.

> Perquisites I never did, or ever can make, and with these other Allowances I have not maintained myself since my being with his Grace, but I have spent upwards of £200 of my own Stock, and yet I have been Constantly Employed, so as to have no Idle time for pleasures or Extravagance . . .[1]

Cromp ruefully pointed out that the late Duke of Kingston had promised him a sinecure at the Privy Seal Office worth £200 a year, but this had never materialized. He went on to compare his salary with the remuneration of stewards of other large estates, and reminded the guardians that an adequate salary which procured efficient service was an economy in the long run. The Coke estate at Holkham in Norfolk, he pointed out, had a much lower rental than the Kingston one, and, he said, it was 'owned on all hands that Estate was managed with the least Expense and the best economy that hath been known'; but the Holkham steward received at least £300 with his audit allowances and travelling expenses, and he also had the tenancy of £400 worth of land at Holkham at a good bargain. He spoke up also on behalf of his clerk. Now, he said, that the clerk 'is grown up and master of his Pen and Business, he will Expect, he must in Justice have, some further Allowance'. As a result of his representations Cromp was given a salary of £240 a year as 'Auditor and General Surveyor of the Estates', £80 for acting as secretary to the guardians, and £30 for looking after the accounts of the young Duke of Kingston while he was abroad, and for keeping in correspondence with his tutor. His clerk was to receive £50 a year. The steward's total salary, therefore, was raised by £130 to £350 a year, and subsequently the Duke raised it again to £400.

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Although, of course, the organization varied from one estate to another, there were many common features in estate administration. One obvious essential was a central office where the records and accounts were kept and correspondence dealt with, and where important questions could be discussed with the proprietor. On a large estate this office might be presided over by a separate official, described as accountant or secretary. The Duke of Bedford kept his estate office in London, where he had so much important property, but more commonly it was situated at the proprietor's main residence. After the Duke of Kingston attained his majority and took control of his estates, he moved his office to Thoresby, the Nottinghamshire home of the Pierrepont family. A steward's office was fitted up there, and furnished with works of reference which included a complete set of Acts of Parliament, a Law Dictionary, Thoroton's *History of Nottinghamshire*, and a Chambers's Dictionary. A secondary office, with a steward's room and parlour, was provided at the old family house at Holmepierrepont near Nottingham, which served as a central point for the estates in the southern part of Nottinghamshire. Sir Joseph Banks, the well-known Lincolnshire proprietor, kept an estate office at Reevesby which was considered a model of its kind. From Arthur Young's description we know that it consisted of two rooms, divided by a brick partition and iron door as safeguards against fire. The furniture included map-tables, a bookcase, desks, and a travelling bookcase, together with measures, levels, and other necessary equipment. At a few minutes' notice, Sir Joseph claimed, he could lay his hands on his papers on any subject; there were 156 drawers, all numbered, and a comprehensive index of names and subjects.[1]

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[1] Lincs. R.O.: Monson S.C. XIV, Monson 28B/12.

In a well-regulated office, such as Sir Joseph's, all contracts, agreements, letters, accounts, and other documents were numbered and systematically filed, and all oral agreements or messages immediately committed to writing. The steward's assistants, and the staff responsible for the park, plantations, home farm, pleasure gardens, and so forth, kept their own rough accounts; these were periodically made up, copied out, and presented to the steward for inspection, and the fair copies subsequently bound together into volumes. Separate totals were calculated for each kind of receipt and expenditure, and summaries of the accounts were abstracted so that the landlord could readily get a general picture of the state of his affairs. In addition, field books or registers, containing the name, measurement, and estimated value of the land and buildings held by each tenant, were kept for each property and were revised periodically. Office aids included life-tables for converting lives into years, invaluable in those areas where farms were still let on the archaic lease for lives, and business ready-reckoners for the purpose of calculating the number of years' purchase to be paid for land. For easy reference one steward thought it wise to make a note in his memorandum book of 'Sir Isaac Newtons Computacion of y^{e} value of Leases for Lives' (according to which a new lease for three lives

[1] A. Young, *General View of Lincolnshire* (2nd ed., 1808), pp. 22–23.

was equivalent to a term of twenty-seven years).[1] Some landlords, such as Lord Monson, introduced standardized forms for use as receipts, rentals, and surveys, and he even drew up a form to help the tenants keep their farming accounts in order. Lord Monson's office also had a device for keeping details of an estate constantly up to date and visible at a glance. It consisted of a large piece of vellum, with slots for the insertion of strips of paper bearing information about each tenant, his land and rent, covenants, and other details. The strips could be amended or replaced, of course, as new information came to hand.[2]

In 1760 the London steward of a Kent estate used printed notices for the purpose of summoning the tenants to the manorial courts. (These courts lasted in Kent until well into the nineteenth century.) The steward merely filled in on each notice the name of the manor, the tenant's name, and the date. Detailed instructions were issued for the holding of the court at one of these manors, Westerham. In addition to the proclamations to be made, the homage to be taken from copyholders, and the acknowledgements to be made by freeholders, there was a set procedure for swearing in the jury and taking the foreman's oath, the constable's oath, and the oaths of the leather-sealers and aleconners. The jury were told

> to inquire whether the Constable and other Officers have discharged their duty in arresting Felons, pursuing Hues and Cries and apprehending Rogues and Vagabonds. You are to take Notice that there ought to be a Cage and pair of Stocks kept in proper repair for securing of Idle and disorderly persons, and you are to inquire into all breaches of the Peace, Riots, Routs and unlawful Assemblies.

Further, the jury were to impound cattle removed illegally, and ascertain whether any alehouses had been kept without a licence, whether gaming was indulged in and any persons were making unlawful use of dogs and guns; they were also to detect false weights and measures, prevent the activities of forestallers, and check all encroachments and nuisances on the highways.[3]

To assist the steward of a large estate, part-time rent collectors, known as receivers, bailiffs, or under-stewards, were appointed to carry out routine business for each group of properties. These receivers had to be men of substance, for in order to qualify for the post they had to find a considerable sum as security. Local attorneys or large farmers living in the district usually undertook the work. Effective supervision of the receivers was difficult, and was probably the most serious weakness in the administration of a large eighteenth-century estate. Some stewards were content to keep in touch with them by letter, but others, like Thomas Cromp, made it their business to ride round frequently and maintain a thorough personal knowledge of both the receivers and the properties. Some supervision was certainly needed, for the receivers, being busy men with their own concerns to look after, were often lax in their duties, and as a consequence many landlords were obliged to accept a considerable delay in their receipts and sometimes found their farms sadly run down.

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[1] Berks. R.O.: D/EPb E.3.

[2] Lincs. R.O.: Monson 19/1, 8/53/28.

[3] Kent R.O.: U409, M 4.

The Duke of Kingston's steward frequently complained of the carelessness and dilatory habits of the receivers employed on the estate, and one of the laggards was eventually dismissed for allowing land to remain untenanted and for being persistently behind in his accounts. Such big sums were required as surety, however, that receivers for large rent collections were not easily replaced. As much as £12,000 was required from the receiver of the largest Kingston collection, comprising the bulk of the Nottinghamshire estates, and Joseph Gace, for many years responsible for collecting the Lincolnshire rents, was a farmer of very considerable substance. He had land of his own producing rents totalling £728 a year, and he also leased land worth £434 a year from the Duke. In addition, he was at one time receiver-general of land tax for part of the county. Gace, it appears, dabbled rather too much in high finance, for in 1731 he was brought to bankruptcy owing over £15,000, including the sum of £4,560 due to the Duke of Kingston. Cromp felt some sympathy for the old receiver and tried to straighten out his affairs, but in the end he had to admit defeat. 'We find nothing but Ruin can come . . .' he wrote, 'Gace is here in Floods of Tears writing home to his wife and friends'. He did succeed, however, in persuading the Kingston guardians to appoint Gace's son as the new receiver for the Lincolnshire collection.

The bad habits of the receivers of the widespread Kingston properties remained an important cause of inefficiency, losses of rent, and delays in payment. In 1732 Cromp wrote about one of them that:

> he was here on Fryday to receive rents and that took up his day, he must go home because Saturday was his market, he would not come Monday because he knew I was busy on Poll days. Thursday was

> fixed and I prepared myself for him and had several people here to settle accounts, etc., he never came nor sent word . . . these things Disconcert all my affairs and I can do nothing . . . he puts me off with Shifts and Evasions worse than Schoolboys when they play Truant . . . .

Of course, the arrears of rent caused by the receivers' carelessness reduced the inflow of ready money and greatly complicated the book-keeping. In flagrant cases the receivers had to pay the penalty of laxity. 'I can allow no charges on the Duke for your mistake about Jackson's Arrears,' wrote Cromp to a receiver in 1742, 'it is lost by your not returning it, for he paid all the Rest and is Dead and Gon.'[1]

One may sympathize with the receivers to some extent, for it was never easy to get farmers to part with their money. Rents were received either when the local manor court was held, or more usually on an appointed day at a neighbouring market town, often the day after a fair, when the farmers disposed of their produce. Sir Richard Sutton's Nottinghamshire rents, for example, were collected on the day after 'Maudlin Fair' at Newark, and on the Monday after Nottingham Plough Day Fair; his Lincolnshire rents, due at May Day, were receivable any day after 29th October, the date of Horncastle Fair, and rents due at Martinmas were collected at the latter end of May or the beginning of June.[2] Thus the tenants were allowed about six months' grace in paying their rents (which were already payable six months in arrear), and in practice they often secured a further respite by failing to appear on the appointed day or by paying in instalments. Even longer delays in payments were not unknown. About 1740 some Berkshire rents due on Lady Day were not paid until the following November, or in some cases as late as the March of the following year; similarly, the Michaelmas rents were not paid until the September of the following year. A few tenants were even permitted to be two or three years behind, over quite a long period, without being regarded formally as 'in arrear'.

Receivers were inclined to speak of a 'good collection' when defaulters were unusually few, and the steward of the Archer estates made a typical comment when he wrote to his landlord in 1715:

> I have some of y^{e} farmers yett unpd., viz old John and Tom Bennett and Geo Pepper. Old John wold be putting off as he used to do;

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[1] Lincs. R.O.: Monson S.C. XIV, XVI; Manvers Colln., Kingston Letters.

[2] Notts. R.O.: DDM 103/17.

> said he wold pay a good sum ab^{t} may day, butt I told him you had occasion for yr. money and he must pay now.

Invariably some tenants failed to pay in full, thus obliging the receiver to delay the completion of his accounts. It might be necessary to take a strong line with such defaulters, and one Berkshire receiver reported telling a tenant

> that I did not care to Receive his money unless he would pay his full Rent—so called in George Hill to know his Rent, who likewise fell 6 or 7 pound short, but upon my Refusing to receive his in part he went out and Borrowed it, and came and paid in full—But George Church immediately after Dinner went off without saying anything or leaving his Bill, so I though he was gon to fetch the Money he wanted, but I have Heard nothing of him since . . .[1]

Sometimes it was the steward rather than the defaulting tenant who felt more the landlord's irritation at unpaid rents. Thus the Duke of Chandos wrote in caustic terms to his Mr. Griffith at Cannons:

> but I must tell you if you'll accept of Excuses instead of Money, you'll never have your Purse well filled, and if they find you will be abused with Promises and Expectations they'll never fail to furnish you with as many as you'll take. Your best way will be to set out in the beginning with letting them see their Rent must be paid, and that you'll not be triffled with, and that after once their Rent is paid, you'll be as good and as kind to 'em in all other respects as they can with reason desire . . . I own I am sensible of the general poverty of the country, but at the same time must take notice they have exceeding good bargains, and that had they the same conveniencies of Markets and Vent for their Goods as we have in these Southern parts of the Island, the same quantity of ground would fetch three times the rent, and have it well paid.[2]

In a subsequent letter Chandos again expressed himself in strong terms, although this time his ire was aimed at the tenant:

> I have heard nothing of James Gould about what you wrote me, but pray let him know I am much displeased with the saucy manner he made you, that you are not a jot stricter with the Tenants than I require you should be, and as to my Rent I am determined to

[1] Berks. R.O.: D/EX 32/106 (1733).

[2] Chandos Letter Books, 26 Mar. 1742.

> have it, and since he could find money to buy sheep, I will make him find it to pay me what is justly my due, and therefore I desire you'll without loss of time Sue him for it, if he has not paid both his Lady Day and Michas Rents, and let him know at the same time that I do this, not only for the sake of getting in my Rent, but also to teach him better Manners.[1]

At the same time the wise landlord knew the limits of firmness; and when times were bad he preferred to help his farmers out rather than insist on having his rents at the cost of untenanted farms. A further letter of Chandos illustrates this principle:

> Since William Harris is not only a poor man but an industrious one you may acquaint him, I am willing, in consideration of his great loss, to allow him the year's rent he owed at Ladyday 1735 but shall expect in return that he proves a very good tenant for the future and fails not to pay his rent punctually as it falls due.[2]

Already at the beginning of the eighteenth century it was quite usual for the larger farmers to pay their rents not in cash but by bank bills and inland bills of exchange. The defective state of the currency and the absence as yet of a sound and comprehensive banking system encouraged the use of such credit instruments as three-months bills for making large payments. The danger of highway robbery made it risky to send cash long distances by road, although this was still a common practice (as in the case of the Duke of Newcastle's Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire rents), but receivers increasingly made use of bills when remitting rents to the steward or to the landlord's London banker. Cash might be sent more readily when there was a trustworthy tenant about to visit the capital, or it might be disguised in some apparently innocent parcel and sent by carrier; Sir Robert Walpole's steward outwitted the highwaymen by secreting the rents inside some geese he had prepared for Sir Robert's table.[3] Sir Jacob Bouverie had the rents of his Kentish properties, in the form of cash and bills, given to the care of captains of Folkestone fishing vessels taking cargoes up to London.[4] But bills were often sent direct to one of the group of private banks in London—Hoare's or Child's, for instance—which catered especially for the needs of landowners, receiving rents and holding balances which could be drawn upon by note or bill, and also making loans on the security of mortgages and bonds.

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[1] *Ibid.*, 4 Feb. 1743/4.

[2] Chandos Letter Books, Chandos–Charles Lewis, 20 Sept. 1735.

[3] J. H. Plumb, 'The Walpoles: Father and Son', in *Studies in Social History* (ed. J. H. Plumb, 1955), p. 193.

[4] Kent R.O.: Radnor MSS. U. 270.

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Although the steward normally tried to maintain friendly relations with the tenants—overlooking minor misdemeanours or giving a helping hand in times of difficulty, and always providing plentiful refreshment on rent days—nevertheless a conflict of interests was bound to arise sometimes, and especially when alterations to the farms or reassessments of the rents were afoot. Bad tenants who persistently fell behind with their rents, broke their covenants, farmed in a slovenly manner, neglected repairs, sub-let their land, or cut timber without permission, all had to be restrained and punished. It must not be imagined, however, that farmers lived in fear and trembling of the landlord's displeasure. On the contrary, tenants of a reputable proprietor confidently expected to enjoy security of tenure for their lifetime, if not for that of their heirs, too, and this was the case even when they possessed no lease. Large tenants in particular, knowing that they were not to be easily replaced, could afford to take an independent attitude and often treated their landlord as an equal, while bad tenants were neither easily intimidated nor quickly removed.[1] One of the Duke of Kingston's Yorkshire tenants withstood fourteen attempts at eviction, and publicly declared his intention always to oppose him 'that would by an over-ruling power Crush us into Slavery . . .' When the steward visited the village this tenant, he reported, 'followed me from house to house thro' the Town with the most abusive opprobations and provoking language I have ever heard . . . used to anybody in my life . . .'[2] Drunkenness among tenants also had to be checked. It was regarded as injurious to the reputation of an estate, and stewards saw fit the threaten with removal farmers who were reported to be 'unsteady'. Sir Mark Stuart Pleydell, who kept detailed memoranda of all matters concerning his farms, made a careful note of an alehouse incident in which one of his tenants figured. It reads:

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[1] See my article, 'The Size of Farms in the Eighteenth Century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XIV, 3 (1961), pp. 473–7.

[2] Nottingham University, Manvers Colln.

> Tuesd. 21 Jan^{y} at Swan inn, Farrindon, kept by Thos. Steed, drunk & had staid all night, & next morn^{g} struck Landlady on head (a pint of blood & very near murder'd, per Langley Surg^{e}). Ord^{ts} to Ma^{s} of Red Lyon Aleho. to guard him . . . I don't find him remarkable for Toddy any more than w^{t} shall casually happen . . . Liquors sold at these Ale-houses 'Wine, Brandy, Rum, Gin, Toddy,' all factitious and poison.[1]

Considerable care was given to the selection of tenants for large farms. A recommendation from the prospective tenant's old landlord as to his character, ability in husbandry, and general reliability was regarded as an essential preliminary, and thorough inquiries were made into the extent of his capital. Bargaining over the rent between the farmer and the steward would follow, but the final decision was sometimes left to the landlord. In 1716, for instance, Sir Jacob Bouverie wrote to his steward:

> You say an agreement is made between ye Widdow Ladd, tenant of my Standen Farm, and her eldest son for his taking that farm if I consent to it, which I cannot resolve to do without further assurance of his ability and diligence and of his general understanding for Husbandry, for ye Farme is undoubtedly a great pennyworth, and I would not have it turned into Slothfull or negligent hands.[2]

Although agricultural writers of the time were fond of sneering at stewards for their ignorance of husbandry, it is known that some stewards played an important role in fostering improvement, and as a leading authority has said, were 'key figures in the agricultural advance of the eighteenth century'.[3] In the high farming era of the next century the chief agents of the great estates were frequently the driving force behind the great efforts in drainage, improved buildings, transport facilities, and other prerequisites of agricultural progress, as recent studies have shown.[4] Their importance in the eighteenth century is more difficult to establish, but there can be little doubt that they contributed significantly in securing the enclosure of open fields, commons, and waste lands, and in achieving more efficient size and better layout of farms, revision of tenures and careful selection of tenants, and the introduction of improved rotations and soil improvement. Of course, the scattered nature of many large estates, with their systems of tenure and cultivation varying from one property to another, made them difficult to manage efficiently. The fragmentation of ownership also made such developments as enclosure and the introduction of improved rotations a work of time and trouble. Nevertheless, progress towards improved farming was achieved, if only slowly, and the development of the large estates under more efficient management was undoubtedly of great long-term significance in view of the expanding demands from industry and population.

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[1] Berks. R.O.: D/EPb/E.8.

[2] Kent Archives Office, Radnor MSS., U 270 Cl.

[3] H. J. Habakkuk, 'Economic Functions of Landowners in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Explorations in Entrepreneurial Hist.*, VI (1953), p. 94.

[4] See F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (1963), Ch. VI, and David Spring, *The English Landed Estate in the Nineteenth Century: Its Administration* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), ch. IV.

The land stewards were a vital factor in this progress, and they were sometimes directly important in the development of farming techniques. Many members of the profession were experienced farmers, and some of them were well-known experts on farming practice. The best-known agricultural writers of the age, Edward Laurence, Arthur Young, William Marshall, Thomas Stone, Nathaniel Kent, and Thomas Davis, were all stewards at some point in their careers, and quite a number of the Board of Agriculture's county surveyors were selected from the ranks of the land stewards. Stewards were specifically mentioned in the county reports, and by Arthur Young, as experimenting with crop rotations, ploughs, and grasses, and as being responsible for inserting progressive covenants in leases. It is likely that stewards also did much to propagate new ideas by means of informal advice given to tenants in the course of inspecting estates, while in some leases and farm agreements the tenants were explicitly bound to abide by the steward's advice.

The many-sided developments in eighteenth-century agriculture—resulting in expansion of the cultivated acreage, creation of more efficient farm units, higher output and improved methods of production—provided the necessary basis for the more remarkable and widespread technical advances of the next century. Many influences contributed to the eighteenth-century progress, of which improved estate management by expert professional stewards was, of course, only one; but it was not an unimportant one, and the land stewards deserve their place alongside the improving landlords, the progressive farmers and stock-breeders, the inventors of implements and machinery, and the literary farmers and propagandists, as an essential ingredient of that complex process known as the agricultural revolution.

A. H. John

2 Farming in Wartime: 1793–1815

I

Because of its central position in the economy, no sector was more affected than farming by the war which, with two short respites, lasted from February 1793 to July 1815. To the needs of a growing civilian population were added the requirements of a large military force, as well as the help provided to occasionally famine-stricken allies. Apart from the demand for bread or bread-grains, Government contracts in the West Country alone, it is reported, required by 1813 'nearly 400 fat bullocks per week for the Victualling Office, for the Royal Navy, the Prison Ships and Garrisons at Plymouth, and the War Prison on Dartmoor'[1]—equivalent to a seventh of the annual sales of cattle at Smithfield. Military requirements also meant extra quantities of leather, tallow, timber, wool, and horse-feed. Horses became expensive early in the war and by 1810 the strangely modern complaint was that they were 'scarce and dear, which need not excite wonder, as a foreign slaughter house seems regularly appointed for these animals'.[2]

Part of this enhanced demand was met by increased imports made possible by our command of the seas. Grains from Europe and the U.S.A. supplemented the yields of English fields when crops were poor, and timber from North America partly offset the fall in supplies from the Baltic. The average yearly import of raw wool equalled 3.85 m. pounds in 1792–6 and 7.38 m. pounds in 1809–12;[3] while the 'leather content of imported hides' rose from 4.3 m. pounds in 1796–8 to a 'figure apparently approaching 20 m. pounds' in 1810–15.[1] Ireland, in particular, became an important source of grain and provisions, so helping to counter the Continental Blockade; Irish grain was allowed free access to British markets after 1806. Deliveries of foreign produce, however, could be very irregular and, because of the exigencies of war, were often insufficient and always expensive. The real value of corn, grain, meal, and flour brought to this country from foreign ports between 1793 and 1811, for example, was estimated at £56.5 m. sterling; £19 m. of which were accounted for by the difficulties of 1799 and 1800, and a further £7 m. by the poor crop of 1809.[2] Without such imports the country's position would have been grave indeed; but in all cases they only marginally supplemented home production. It was domestic farming which shouldered the main burden of wartime supplies, virtually as a response to market conditions. Government played no direct role in encouraging output except by simplifying legal procedures for enclosures in an act of 1801, and by helping the spread of new farming methods through support of the Board of Agriculture founded in 1793. 'War, as waged by Buonaparte,' it was said, 'is not now a question of finance, but of resources of population; the strength of a State opposed to France, must be estimated by the sum of its population divided by the extent of its territory'.[3]

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[1] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XIV (1813), p. 507.

[2] *Ibid.*, XI (1810), p. 128.

[3] B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 191.

The initial impact of war was to depress some prices and raise others; but increased demand, with inflationary finance and the inelasticity characteristic of agricultural supply, spelt in the long run a substantial upward trend in the value of all kinds of farm produce. The general pattern of this movement is well known. It was not until the later years of the Revolutionary War, and especially after 1798, that deficient harvests, heavy Government buying and a high, if uneven, level of economic activity led to a general rise of prices. For the decade that followed, most items were between 50 and 70 per cent dearer than they had been in the 'canal mania' of the 1790s, despite a fall in grain prices. A recurrence of bad harvests and an intensified war effort lifted prices to their second peak after 1809, to be broken by the return of bountiful crops in 1813 and by peace two years later.

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[1] P. Deane and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688–1959* (Cambridge, 1962), p. 74.

[2] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XIV (1813), p. 29.

[3] Quoted by W. Richards, 'Simple Measures by which the occurrence of Famines may be prevented', *The Pamphleteer* (London, 1816), p. 189.

While this is familiar ground, what has been less well explored is the relative movement of prices between the major items of farm output. Below average yields in the harvests of 1794–5, 1804, and 1809 meant sharp increases in wheat prices: while extensive deficiencies in the harvests of 1799–1800 and again in 1811–12 brought dearth—perhaps more critical on the first than the second occasion. But there were also not unimportant differences in the pattern of wheat and other grain prices. The deficiencies of the 1796 harvest were largely confined to wheat, suggesting that where coarser bread-grains were in use food supplies were less affected.[1] The same was true of the harvests of 1804, 1809, and 1810. Partly because of restrictions on malting, barley prices rose less than those of wheat and oats during many years in the first decade of the nineteenth century, with a possible reduction of the acreage under this crop.[2] While grain prices tended to fluctuate violently with the alternation of good and bad harvests, the prices of animal products moved far less drastically. Except in years of dearth, the extent of their increase matched—and in some years exceeded—that of grains. Even in years of extreme prices for bread-grains Government buying more than offset any fall in civilian demand. 'Cheese', it was said in 1800, 'has also risen to an extravagant price and the Government factors are busily purchasing'.[3] Thus while war meant an upward movement of all agricultural prices, there was no continuous tendency for those of grain to increase faster than the prices of animal products.

The most obvious response to the stimulus of higher prices was the extension of cultivation and a quickening of enclosing activity, with its possibility of greater production. Half of all Enclosure Acts passed between 1727 and 1845 were enacted during the war years, involving slightly more than 3 m. acres. Considerable areas were also enclosed privately for which exact data is difficult to obtain, but which could well have equalled in extent those dealt with under Act of Parliament. Few counties completely escaped this activity, but, if the incidence of the Acts provide a guide, two parts of the country in particular showed a marked concentration of land investment. The counties of Suffolk, Cambridge, Norfolk, Lincoln, and York account for fully a third of parliamentary enclosure: while Berkshire, Wiltshire, Somerset, and Gloucestershire form a second area of marked land reorganization.

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[1] W. M. Stern, 'The Bread Crisis in Britain 1795–96', *Economica* (1964), p. 169.

[2] The quantities of malt upon which excise was levied averaged 24.5 m. bushels annually in 1790–9 and 22.5 m. in the following decade.

[3] *The Farmer's Magazine*, I (1800), p. 111.

Table I Enclosure Acts, 1793–1815[1]

	Mainly commonfields with commonable land		Commons and wastes and common pasture only		TOTAL	
	Acts	Acreage	Acts	Acreage	Acts	Acreage
1793–5	156	274,354	47	64,672	203	339,026
1796–8	142	245,987	59	59,544	201	305,531
1799–1801	188	322,837	76	149,871	264	472,708
1802–4	169	265,552	84	134,893	253	400,445
1805–7	146	208,545	95	124,516	241	333,061
1808–10	190	287,543	119	161,892	309	449,435
1811–13	195	283,403	169	212,109	364	495,512
1814–16	104	143,583	124	122,820	228	266,403

Together these two regions represent the location of half of the wartime enclosure Acts. There was, too, a good deal of activity in the counties in the western half of England, stretching along the Welsh border and from Oxfordshire into Lancashire. The passage of an Act did not necessarily mean that enclosure was immediately put in hand, and there is undoubtedly some difference between the area affected by legislation and that actually enclosed. Nevertheless, wartime developments virtually closed the frontier of cultivation in this country, so marking a stage in our agricultural history. Continued population growth, rising real incomes and a market enjoying varying degrees of protection until the 1870s ensured that henceforth extra food supplies could only come from an extension of 'high farming'.

Some 1,600 square miles of wastes, commons, and common pasture were affected by parliamentary Act alone. Much settlement was pushed into the wet, poverty-stricken uplands and moors, but not all—or even possibly the greater part—of the area so enclosed was the poor-quality land so often referred to by contemporaries. Big drainage schemes in the Lincolnshire fens and in the Humber district brought into more intensive use many acres of fertile soil, the Deeping Fen scheme authorized in 1801, for example, alone involving an area of 34,000 acres. The same was true of farms carved from wastes and poor pasture on the light, free-draining soils where the newer techniques of mixed farming could be adopted. In 1802 'the annual produce of' Low Hunslow Farm on the Yorkshire Wolds, 'amounted to 2,300 couples of rabbits, the clip of between 60 and 80 sheep, a number of lambs and half a dozen young cattle'. In that year 'hedged fields were laid out, steep valleysides were planted with trees, and a new farmhouse was constructed on the site of the old warren house. The warren was ploughed-out, and within a year or two the farm had assumed its present likeness'.[1] It was from the farms created from the wastes that substantial additions were made to the number of large holdings, although the big area of commonfields reorganized during these years must also have involved some consolidation of units.

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[1] G. Slater in *Report of the Agricultural Committee, The Tariff Commission*, III (2nd ed., London, 1906), para. 39.

Farm output, however, was not the only sector of the market to show price increases. Farmers' costs also rose. There was a widespread upward movement in rents; wages increased substantially in various parts of the country; while other items of input, such as tools, carts, and phosphates in the form of bone manure, became more expensive. Further, the agricultural sector is thought to have borne a disproportionate amount of wartime taxation. 'Had the commerce and industry sectors paid their "fair share" of the mounting costs of the French wars, it is likely that the Industrial Revolution, then in its early stages, would have suffered a serious setback'.[2] Taken in conjunction with fluctuations in the price of wheat and other products, the effect of these factors was to force the pace of agricultural improvement. Enclosure of various types of land was certainly the most obvious—possibly the most important—method of increasing output, but it was not the sole means of intensifying the use of farm resources.

As far as labour is concerned, inferences about the state of the labour market drawn simply from the existence of the Speenhamland System, or from the uneven course of industries deeply committed to foreign trade like the manufacture of cottons, can be misleading. The diversion of some half-million men into the Army and Navy, together with needs of the militia and other part-time service, absorbed a good deal of the underemployed—and unemployed—whose numbers seemed to have increased between 1763 and 1789. Complaints about shortage of building workers and harvest labour had been widespread during the 'canal boom' of 1790–2. They were repeated in counties as far apart as

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[1] A. Harris, *The Rural Landscape of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (Hull, 1961), p. 86.

[2] P. Deane, *The First Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 1965), p. 50.

Hampshire, Cambridgeshire, and Cumberland in 1797, when the end of this constructional work coincided with threats of invasion.[1]

Increasing activity in the country-side brought more complaints in the first decade of the century. With Napoleon's army encamped around Boulogne from the autumn of 1803 to the summer of 1805, the conditions of 1797 were repeated. 'Labourers are very scarce, in consequence of the drafts for the army', it was said in Essex in 1803; 'in some cases, £50 has been given for men to serve for those balloted for the army of reserves'.[2] These were the years when, according to A. L. Bowley and G. H. Wood, 'the average earnings in a normal week' for farm labour rose most rapidly, their indices moving from 87 to 100.[3] 'Our drainage business', it was reported from Lincolnshire in 1806, 'goes on successfully, though rather slower than could be wished, The scarcity of workmen is great; indeed, a sufficient number cannot be obtained on any account; and though the improvement to be gained from this great undertaking must ultimately be of great advantage to those concerned, yet in the mean time the agricultural interest of the district suffers materially from the rise on labour thereby occasioned'.[4] Two years later fears were expressed in the same county that part of the harvest might be lost for 'want of reapers'.[5] Peak agricultural prices and substantial enclosing activity maintained the enhanced level of wages in most areas between 1809 and 1813, and even exceeded it in some places. According to one report, weekly wages for men in western Hereford were 12*s.* in 1811, 12*s*–15*s.* in 1812, and 10*s.*–12*s.* in 1813. In Norfolk daily wages were 1*s.* 10*d.* in 1809, 2*s.* 6*d.* in 1811, and 1*s.* 8*d.* to 2*s.* 6*d.* in 1813. In one parish in Northamptonshire weekly wages rose from 9*s.* in 1808 to 12*s.* in 1813, and in another in Lincolnshire from 10*s.* to 14*s.* respectively.[6]

The pressure on labour supplies was, of course, never uniform over the entire country, but varied from area to area according to the relative levels of regional activity and the availability of labour. The reflection of the interplay of these factors was the extent to which wages increased: and the greatest advances occurred in the neighbourhood of London and the growing industrial centres in the provinces, or in counties like Lincolnshire, where there was much extension of cultivation. It was in the latter parts of the country that 'the dichotomy in the employment available through the farming year was accentuated',[1] giving rise to the notorious gang system. Wage increases were smaller where there was less activity, as in some of the southern counties; while in Scotland the continued extension of sheep pastures accelerated depopulation in the Highlands, partly through emigration. The Bowley-Wood index of 'average earnings in a normal week' gives figures of 59 for 1793 and 105 for 1812, suggesting that, in general, agricultural wages broadly kept pace with food prices. For the more fortunate farm worker there may well have been some rise in real wages, although there must have been considerable distress in years of dearth. Large investment in agriculture greatly helped to counterbalance fluctuations in employment caused by the difficulties of foreign trade; while the high level of work in the country-side helps to explain the muted social protest against the massive reorganization of land.

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[1] T. S. Ashton, *Economic Fluctuations in England, 1700–1800* (Oxford, 1959), p. 167, and E. L. Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England, 1793–1872', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVII (1964–5), pp. 323–5.

[2] *The Farmer's Magazine*, IV (1803), p. 493.

[3] B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

[4] *The Farmer's Magazine*, VII (1806), p. 401.

[5] *Ibid.* IX (1808), p. 410.

[6] B.M. Add. MSS. 40,587 ,ff. 168–9, 195–6, 212–13.

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One effect of dear labour was to encourage economies in those farm activities in which it was most intensively used. 'Numerous patents were taken out between 1788 and 1816 for drills, reaping, mowing, haymaking, and winnowing machines, as well as for horse-rakes, scarifiers, chaff-cutters, turnip-slicers, and other mechanical aids to agriculture.'[2] The greatest advances were made, however, where the need was most pressing, namely in harvest-work on the bigger farms, where, it was claimed in 1805, 'more money is expended in cutting the crop than formerly was paid to the landlord under the name of rent'.[3] Failure to develop a successful reaper, despite the offer of large premiums, merely increased the necessity of mechanizing post-harvest work made possible by Andrew Meikle's threshing machine, first constructed in 1784. 'Dear labour had brought it into Lancashire before 1794'[4] and dear labour extended its use during the war years. In the

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[1] E. L. Jones, 'The Agricultural Labour Market in England, 1793–1872', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVII (1964–5), p. 324.

[2] Lord Ernle, *English Farming: Past and Present* (6th ed., London, 1961), p. 208.

[3] *The Farmer's Magazine*, VI (1805), p. 492.

[4] J. H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, I (2nd ed., Cambridge 1930), p. 139.

East Lothians every farm but the smallest was reported to possess one—usually horse driven. By the same date they were supposed to be in general use in Essex and Norfolk, on the larger farms in Yorkshire and Northumberland, and were 'creeping in' on holdings in Kent, the Vale of Glamorgan, and elsewhere. The extent of their adoption depended very much upon the local labour situation: for as one Dorset farmer argued, 'so long as I can get my oats and barley thrashed pretty clean for 16*d.* or 18*d.* per quarter, and my wheat equally reasonable, I will not lay out £150 for a thrashing machine; as separating corn from straw in that way, with wear and tear, and interest, must cost near as much as mine does by hand labour'.[1] Nevertheless, by 1815 the use of the threshing machine appears sufficiently widespread to make inevitable serious unrest when labour conditions changed in the postwar years.

The need for labour-saving devices was less pressing in the normal run of farm work, yet even here wartime costs were not without some effect. Expensive seed is claimed to have led to a wider use of the drill, and labour costs to the construction of larger drills. Expensive horse-feed and high wages help to explain the speedier adoption of lighter ploughs and more efficient wagons and carts. On the whole, however, the age of widespread improvements in farm implements still lay in the future.

Much seems also to have been achieved in improving farm methods. In arable husbandry there was a greater insistence upon rotational cultivation by landowners in many areas,[2] and a good deal of intelligent adaptation of these practices to local conditions in others, especially in Northumberland and the Scottish Lowlands. There was a very considerable expansion of the acreage under potatoes and adoption of a more prolific strain of oats. To the established methods of improving and manuring the soil was added the use of phosphates in the form of crushed bones. The practice spread from Yorkshire into Lincolnshire, and was reported to have greatly improved forest and light soils in Nottinghamshire by 1814.[3] Livestock improvement continued unabated, the Southdown sheep, or its crosses, for example, becoming the 'dominant chalkland strain', three of which 'could be run for two of the older breed'.[4] Attention was also paid to better methods of feeding.

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[1] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XII (1811), p. 471.

[2] R. A. C. Parker, 'Coke of Norfolk and the Agrarian Revolution', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., VIII (1955–6), p. 161.

[3] D. Grigg, *The Agricultural Revolution in South Lincolnshire* (Cambridge, 1966), p. 57; *The Farmer's Magazine*, XV (1814), p.348.

[4] E. L. Jones, 'Eighteenth Century Changes in Hampshire Chalkland Farming', *Agricultural History Review*, VIII, 1 (1960), p. 16.

Among the crops experimented with for this purpose the swede was of particular importance, its rapid adoption after 1800 helping to bridge 'the hungry gap between the last of the turnips, which kept badly during the frost, and the first bite of watered grass'.[1] The use of oil cake was also well established for fattening cattle by 1800: linseed cake, for instance, costing £13.13.0 a ton in 1807, was used, 'and much of it', in the East Riding.[2] 'At Bretby, under the charge of Mr. Blackie, and at Swarlstone Lowes then occupied by Mr. Smith,' was seen 'the earliest systematic stall-feeder, with considerably expensive preparation for crushing and steaming and steeping linseed'.[3] Ampler food supplies and better animals, in the view of contemporaries, shortened the period of maturing and so allowed a quicker turnover of capital.

How far the adoption of better farming methods helped to increase output during the war is difficult to estimate, but it may well have been of considerable importance. In the East Lothians it was claimed that wheat production had doubled, the number of sheep and cattle trebled, and 'fully one half' of the farmhouses had been rebuilt between 1778 and 1810. All this had been accomplished by the development of rotations which made much use of leys, 'an increase of turnips' which had 'regularly kept pace with the increased demand for butcher meat', and the introduction of potato growing on a large scale.[4] Similar if less spectacular developments occurred south of the border. 'The last great impulse was given to the already rapidly growing improving system of Northumbrian agriculture' by the Napoleonic Wars[5] and there was a great deal of improvement in Norfolk and elsewhere. The extension of cultivation over wastes and sheep-walks in itself involved more intensive farming, although often in a rudimentary form, as in much of south Lincolnshire. And, as will be argued later, the war years witnessed a considerable rise in the animal population on farms.

But if war conditions helped to make 'the period from 1780 to 1813 one of exceptional activity in agricultural progress',[6] they also set very definite limits to the extent of this improvement. The disruption of European trade adversely affected the import of bones and oil seeds, making both expensive. Constructional work was costly and so kept to a minimum; the great ranges of farm buildings, later to be the keystone of 'high farming', were the product of easier circumstances. The creation of new farms must have meant a heavy drain on the resources of both landowner and farmer; and high wages curtailed investment in land drainage, so necessary for progress on the heavier soils. In much the same way 'the increased value of labour', it was claimed, rendered 'the reduction of field work a most important object where it can be most safely accomplished'.[1] It is thus not improbable that labour inputs were limited over wide areas of the country, so making a less intensive use of land than was possible when the war was over. The difference between the techniques employed on the lighter and heavier soils widened, although wartime prices disguised the distinction. In Hertfordshire, for example, farming was 'managed on a very old-fashioned and improper way'[2] and tenants there, as on similar soils elsewhere, persisted with two crops and a fallow. The long making of the depressed agricultural areas of the postwar years could now be said to have been accomplished.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[2] *The Farmer's Magazine*, VIII (1807), p. 126.

[3] *Quarterly Review*, CLXVIII (1849), p. 410.

[4] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XII (1811), pp. 51–68, 204–23.

[5] J. Grey, 'A View of the past and present state of Agriculture in Northumberland', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society*, III (1841), p. 154.

[6] Lord Ernle, *English Farming: Past and Present* (6th ed., London, 1961), p. 210.

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One way and another, these developments meant big changes in land use. High prices led to a marked extension of cultivation and to a contraction of the acreage under rough pasture and sheep-walks. The spread of better farming methods—even in a rudimentary form—and the greater sensitivity of farmers to market conditions because of enclosure, improved transport, and better means of communication brought a new degree of flexibility into husbandry in many areas. There was a marked diversification of arable crops—the increased acreage of potatoes and swedes, for example; while the use of leys of varying lengths within rotations made possible some adjustment of emphasis between animals and crops in the farming programme. The war years must therefore have seen a marked rise of productivity per acre and possibly some rise per man employed.

What is questionable, however, is whether these changes meant that the 'big increase in the output of grain was achieved only by bringing more land under the plough at the expense of the nation's meat supply'.[1] More intensive cultivation of often poor pasture implied new farming systems in which animals were still of fundamental importance. On the Hampshire chalklands, for instance, 'the extension of grain production' was in a degree compensated by 'a similar expansion of store and mutton production'.[2] Sheep became an 'object of peculiar attention' for the Norfolk farmer by 1800,[3] and a marked increase in the size of flocks and herds was noted in Nottinghamshire between 1808 and 1814.[4] Any fall in the number of animals kept on pasture as a consequence of ploughing was thus counterbalanced by 'the vast increase in the number of animals kept on arable land'.[5] With a limited use of artificial fertilizers it is difficult to see how the fertility of these thin soils could otherwise have been maintained, while the movement of prices and costs gave every encouragement to increasing the number of animals where it was possible on mixed arable farms. There is certainly little evidence that much of the established grasslands in the dairying areas of Cheshire, or in the grazing districts of the Midlands, was converted to arable.[6] The same was true of land in the neighbourhood of the growing towns. 'On the farms situated on the fertile Staffordshire valleys of the Trent and Tame, and those on the light soil pastures of north Warwickshire, the tendency for concentration on fat stock production went from strength to strength during the Napoleonic War'.[7] An increase of approximately 30 per cent in the average yearly sales of cattle and sheep at Smithfield between 1786 and 1795 and 1806 and 1815 lends further support to the argument.

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[1] *The Farmer's Magazine*, IV (1803), p. 198.

[2] *Ibid.*, X (1809), p. 391.

Although much unsuitable land was put under the plough—especially during years of dearth—the idea of a seriously unbalanced agriculture at the end of the war thus rests on very dubious grounds. In the absence of Government direction, the interplay of costs and prices prevented such extreme specialization; and this is confirmed by the relatively limited changes in land usage in the years which immediately followed the war. It is, in fact, impossible to discuss agricultural changes during and after the eighteenth century except in terms of a rising output of animal products. In the view of contemporaries 'the extraordinary growth of the town population, and the consequent increase or demand for all sorts of farm produce, but more especially for butcher's meat, has been the main spring of all the improvements that have been made in husbandry since 1763'.[2]

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[1] Deane & Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[2] E. L. Jones, 'Eighteenth Century Changes in Hampshire Chalkland Farming', *Ag. Hist. Rev.*, VIII, 1 (1960), p. 16.

[3] *The Farmer's Magazine*, IV (1803), p. 567.

[4] *Ibid.*, XV (1814), p. 459.

[5] *Ibid.*, XVII (1816), p. 404.

[6] T. B. Franklin, *British Grasslands* (London, 1953), p. 95: C. Stella Davies, *An Agricultural History of Cheshire, 1750–1850* (Chetham Society, 1962), p. 204.

[7] J. M. Martin, 'Social and Economic Trends in the West Midlands, 1785–1825' (unpublished M. Com. thesis, University of Birmingham, 1960), pp. 121–2. See also H. C. K. Henderson, 'Agriculture in England and Wales in 1801', *The Geographical Journal* (Sept. 1952), p. 343, where it is pointed out that 'emphasis on the decline of arable cultivation in favour of grass for hay is made in many parishes affected by the industrial revolution and the need for local milk supplies, and in coal-mining areas such as South Pembrokeshire where considerable numbers of draught animals needed feeding'.

Table 2. Average Sales at Smithfield Market[1] (in 000s)

	Cattle	Sheep
1766–75	86	607
1776–85	99	686
1786–95	104	711
1796–1805	120	799
1806–15	133	939

This is not without its implications for the much-discussed question of living standards during the industrial revolution. In itself the greater output of meat and dairy products did not necessarily mean a rise in all working-class diets, but farmers were convinced that the increased demand for these articles was closely linked to industrialism. 'Butcher meat', it was said, was 'now in common use among all descriptions of people'.[3] At Morpeth market in the prosperous year of 1803 'amazing numbers of fat lambs are sold through the whole of the summer to supply the immense consumption of Newcastle, Shields, Sunderland and all that vast population upon the sides of the rivers Tyne and Wear . . . Perhaps, too, *miners, keelmen*, and *coalheavers* eat more animal food, in proportion, than any other class of people in this island'.[4] On the other hand, stagnation of trade at Wakefield in 1808 made 'the consumption of these articles much less, the lower class of people not being able to purchase much butcher's meat'.[5] 'This island is ever most prosperous', it was noted, 'when grain is moderate and shambles meat dear. There cannot exist a more infallible criterion'.[1] Perceptive observers drew an important conclusion from this trend: 'the advantage of grass husbandry will increase in direct proportion with prosperity of the country, because the general taste of mankind is in favour of the use of butcher meat'.[2]

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[1] P. Deane and W. A. Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

[2] *The Edinburgh Review*, CXX (1834), p. 392.

[3] *The Farmer's Magazine*, VI (1805), p. 491.

[4] *Ibid.*, IV (1803), p. 305.

[5] *Ibid.*, IX (1808), p. 274.

But meat, dairy produce, and fruit constituted very much the top end of a dietary scale along which the poorer groups in society had always moved, partly in response to the level of wages, the extent of employment, and the cost of bread, partly according to their skill in 'the art of frugal cookery'. Wartime production also made a contribution to the lower end of this scale by the sharp rise in potato output—with its high food yield per acre—after 1800. In the northern parts of the country potatoes 'were in very general use nearly half a century before they were much known or consumed in the counties south of the river Trent'.[3] According to Colquhoun in 1806, their consumption in London had 'gradually increased within the last thirty years, from a very inconsiderable quantity, to about one thousand two hundred tons a week, excepting during the months June and July, when the price is generally beyond the reach of the poor'. Even so, 'to this day' their use was 'by no means general or extensive in many of the southern districts, and the mode of dressing is very little known'.[4] In 1815 'sagacious observers' accounted 'for the different pressure of the late famine on the northern and southern parts of England, from the potatoe being in considerable use in the former'.[5] Yorkshire potato prices lend support to this view, as well as to the belief that the dearth of 1799–1801 was more severely felt than that of 1811–13. This was reinforced by the greater willingness of the people in the northern counties to substitute oat and barley bread for that made from wheaten flour, and by the relative cheapness of coal.

It was Colquhoun's judgement 'that the labouring population of the northern counties of Great Britain (whatever opinion may have prevailed to the contrary) have not only a greater variety of food, but what is of more importance, a greater abundance of nourishing diet, than the labourers in the southern districts enjoy'.[6]

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[1] *Ibid.*, IX (1808), p. 546.

[2] *Ibid.*, XI (1810), p. 207.

[3] P. Colquhoun, *A Treatise on Indigence* (London, 1806), p. 273.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 274.

[5] W. Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

[6] P. Colquhoun, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

Potatoes provided a greater variety in diets in years of good harvests and a 'buffer' against want in times of dearth. In this respect, it should not be overlooked that poor harvests meant not only expensive, but also unpalatable, bread. Successive generations accustomed to drawing bread-grains from areas of stable climatic conditions forget the problem of bad grain which existed until at least a century ago. When attempts were made in 1800 to produce flour 'so as to leave all in but the bran . . . and so it was done, but it was so Corse and Bad and did not agree with the Constitutions, many was hurt and some Died and it was ordered to be made again as usual'.[1] In these circumstances the potato may well have contributed to human welfare in more ways than one.

Table 3. The Price of Potatoes in Yorkshire[2] per bushel of 90 lb.

1799	6*s.*	1807	1*s.* 6*d.* to 2*s.*
1800	6*s.*	1808	2*s.*
1801	6*s.*	1809	3*s.* to 2*s.*
1802	1*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*	1810	2*s.*
1803	2*s.* 3*d.* to 4*s.*	1811	2*s.*
1804	3*s.*	1812	—
1805	3*s.* to 1*s.* 6*d.*	1813	2*s.*
1806	2*s.* to 1*s.* 4*d.*	1814	2*s.*

Nor did the end of the war mean a break in this response to the needs of an industrializing economy. The average quantity of malt annually declared for duty in 1830–39 was about 40 per cent larger than the equivalent figure for the war years. Despite a vast increase in population, the price of best-quality bread in London fell decade by decade

[1] W. Branch Johnson, *The Carrington Diary* (London, 1956), pp. 29–30. The exact result of making bread from sprouted grain is spelt out in the following extract: 'After a wet harvest such as was experienced in the year 1860—my mother often assured me (and indeed I have sampled it myself) that two knives were required to cut the bread when it came to the table—one to tear or cut and the other to clean the used knife before another portion could be taken from the loaf, as the dough (or sponge) made from the flour from sprouted grain fails to rise properly after the already risen yeast has been mixed with the flour, neither will it bake correctly in the oven but runs more or less into a glutinous sticky mass surrounded by a doubtful looking crust—the inside of the loaf when baked being stodgy and sticky with a sickly, sweet, unpalatable flavour'. S. G. Kendall, *Farming Memoirs of a West Country Yeoman* (London, 1944), pp. 12–13.

[2] These prices are taken from the *Farmer's Magazine*. Where more than one quotation is given for a single year, they represent prices in the early and later months of that year.

after 1815; in 1833–1838, as well as in the 1840s, it was as low as it had been in 1790–1800.[1] The slender evidence available for other types of farm output suggest that they, too, conformed to the general pattern. According to Dr. Hobsbawm, 'Smithfield figures show that, while London's population index rose from 100 in 1801 to 202 in 1841, the number of beef cattle slaughtered rose only to 146, and of sheep to 176 in the same period'.[2] But apart from the omission of pig-meat, this, as a contemporary observer noted, 'might lead us to a false conclusion were we not to bear steadily in mind . . . that there has been a rapid increase in the transmission of country-killed meat to London'. This method of supply was already fully established by the end of the eighteenth century and received a big impetus from railway building; the Eastern Counties Railway alone was bringing 600 tons weekly to metropolitan markets in 1849. The number of dead-meat wholesalesmen at Newgate is estimated to have risen from a dozen in 1810 to 200 in 1850.[3]

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That the war period meant prosperity for agriculture—particularly after 1798—with a possibility of a shift in incomes in favour of farmers and landowners, is also well known. As the *Farmer's Magazine* observed in 1810—although with East Lothian farming primarily in view—there was a 'greater quantity of disposable produce, and the advanced prices on articles sold. On corn farms, every production is in greater plenty by superior management; is more easily rendered marketable by the introduction of machinery; and fetches a better price from the interruption of our relations with other countries, and the gradual depreciation of the circulating medium. On feeding farms, the increasing prosperity of the country and the vast consumpt by the army and navy, have occasioned an increasing demand among all ranks of people for butcher meat. This has, of course, augmented the number of animals destined for the table; has led to greater skill in feeding; and consequently brought them sooner to market. On sheep farms, the lambs some years ago have doubled their price and still keep high . . . Wool in general has greatly advanced'.[4] With all their imperfections, estimates of income

[1] Michell and P. Deane, *op. cit.*, pp. 498.
[2] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Labouring Men* (London, 1964), p. 84.
[3] E. Dodd, *The Food of London* (London, 1856), p. 240.
[4] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XI (1810), p. 9.

for tax purposes tell much the same story. Figures under schedule B—an admittedly approximate attempt at assessing income from farming after the payment of rates and taxes—rose from £18.87 m. in 1803 to £23.04 m. in 1810, and to £26.7 m. in 1814.[1]

Not all branches of farming benefited equally, however, from the long period of war. 'The small farmers', it was said of Lincolnshire in 1800, 'have suffered exceedingly from the late calamatous seasons, especially upon the low fenlands, wet clays and heath soils, where their crops were not only deficient but the grain of bad quality'.[2] Much the same was said of South Wales, and must also have been true of other areas not only then but again in 1811–12. With low grain prices and high wages there was a good deal of grumbling from arable farmers in 1802–3, when losses were reported from Norfolk. There were complaints, too, that the graziers, and particularly the breeders of stock, had more than their fair share of profits between 1801 and 1807,[3] after which commercial difficulties and a poor hay crop temporarily reduced the demand for animals. By the end of 1809, on the other hand, lean cattle were 30 per cent higher and store sheep 20 per cent higher than in the previous December. According to a Suffolk farmer, 'Scotchmen are asking such enormous prices for the cattle they bring up, that many of my neighbours, who are large graziers, are determined to set their faces against it, and will purchase none; for what turnips we have can very well be fed by the quantity of sheep and lambs we now hold'.[4] The year 1811 was reported as another poor one for the grazier and an indifferent one for many corn growers. But it was not until the bountiful harvest of 1813 on an extended acreage, enhanced by large Irish imports, that the arable farmer began to encounter serious difficulties. Large surpluses kept prices down in 1814, despite a below-average harvest, while another good crop in 1815 further depressed prices. By then the smaller farmers on the clays were in serious trouble, made less bearable by news that the 'French farmers now bring their Corn into our ports as regularly as we take ours to market; for when the wind is fair, they run over into our ports in small vessels in a few hours, and hawk their Corn about to the millers, and sell as small a quantity as a quarter at a place'.[1] Grain prices, it was alleged from Devonshire, were less than the cost of carrying manure and lime to the fields.

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[1] P. K. O'Brien, 'British Incomes and Property in the Early Nineteenth Century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XII (1959–60), p. 262.

[2] *The Farmer's Magazine*, I (1800), p. 353.

[3] In Scotland, according to T. Telford in 1803, 'on account of the extraordinary rise in the prices of sheep and wool, the sheep farmers have of late years been acquiring wealth'. At the same time 'the very high price of Black Cattle facilitated the means of emigration' from the Highlands in 1801–2. B.P.P., 1802–3, IV, p. 15.

[4] *The Farmer's Magazine*, X (1809), pp. 565–6.

But however unequally distributed, agricultural prosperity was reflected in a marked rise in rents. A 70 per cent increase has been suggested as an average figure, and estimates of income from agricultural land under schedule A of the Income Tax substantiate an advance of 35 per cent between 1806 and 1814 alone. There were, however, considerable regional variations. Rents tended to be higher in Scotland than in England because the Scottish farmer shouldered a smaller burden of rates and tithes. A great deal depended upon the tenure on which farms were held. Tenants, for example, enjoying long leases such as those for three lives, common in the western counties, could easily have escaped any increase at all. The size of farms, the kind of land, and the policy of the landowner were other factors. 'If the market value of arable has increased,' it was said in 1807, 'that of grassland has advanced on a superlative degree. In short, a kind of mania seems to have seized the minds of grass speculators, not to be accounted for, and probably not to be cured, till the patient is weakened and exhausted by the effects of his disease'.[2] The big landowners were held to be less mercentary than the 'jobbers in land', who 'look upon a tenant with the same eye as a merchant would view a pound weight of raisins'.[3]

The great demand for farms strengthened the bargaining position of the landowner, with a consequent blurring of the distinction between landlord's and tenant's capital. There was, too, a tendency to substitute tenancy-at-will for leases because of the uncertainty of prices. With higher rents went increased land values and an active land market. Some of the richer industrial and mercantile families bought estates from impecunious members of the gentry and aristocracy. A few, frightened by inflation and the possibility of invasion, invested in real property, because 'nothing but land can be considered safe'. Many tenants, tempted by the level of wartime prices, either bought their holdings or parcels of land in the neighbourhood. Numbers of thrifty tradesmen acquired small pieces of property sold by enclosure commissioners to defray expenses. Such land fetched £40 an acre in the Fenlands in 1803; and although then considered to be 'an instance of the whimsical disposition of mankind', prices reached £53–£60 an acre two years later.[1] It was possibly in this sector of the land market that activity was highest, reflected in the check to the decline in the numbers of small landowners during the war. There is little evidence of fundamental changes in the overall pattern of landownership.

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[1] *Ibid.*, XVI (1815), p. 122.

[2] *The Farmer's Magazine*, VIII (1807), p. 243.

[3] *Ibid.*, VII (1806), p. 121.

It was from these growing incomes from land that much of the increased investment in agriculture was financed. The unwillingness of London banks and insurance houses to lend on mortgate reinforced this tendency as far as the large landowner was concerned by compelling a greater dependence upon his own, or upon local, resources. Agricultural profits were ploughed back either directly by farmer and landowner, or indirectly by way of loans made through attorneys and the growing banking system. 'One private banking company, that of Messrs Gurney & Co., Norfolk, had at one time during the war, lent out a million and a quarter sterling to their customers in that county and the eastern border of Suffolk'.[2] Across the country, in South Wales, there was very similar activity. 'Until the late eighteenth century, Welsh drovers had obtained the wherewithal to make their large purchases of cattle in the breeding counties from various sources, including the collection of taxes, but afterwards the banks provided much of the necessary capital. Wilkins & Co. would advance on the joint promissory note of a drover and his associates, amounts up to about £2,000 for two or three months, and the money would be used to pay the farmers for their cattle'. The 'Black Ox' Bank of Llandovery and Waters, Jones & Co. of Carmarthen 'would lend to a drover about four times as much as the Brecon Bank without collateral security'.[3] 'There is sufficient evidence', according to Dr. Pressnell, that bank loans were 'not exceptional' in financing enclosure;[4] there is even more that there must have been a very rapid increase in banking habits among the increasing group of larger farmers after 1797. On this, the judgement of one contemporary was that 'no class of the community received so large a share of this accommodation as the agriculturalist, whose security was better and whose habits were less adventurous' than those of any other groups.[5] The contraction of credit which began in 1815 certainly aroused much complaint. Local banks were accused of withholding the usual accommodation 'even from those whose credit is not disputed and still more generally in the country than in large towns', with the result that 'the necessity of raising money has accordingly forced sales at all events; and prices have therefore fallen in a much greater degree than the extent of the supply, compared with the demand, would have otherwise occasioned'.[1]

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[1] *The Farmer's Magazine*, IV (1803), p. 117; VI (1805), p. 511.

[2] The Banker's Circular, 1835, quoted in W. H. Bidwell, *Annals of an East Anglian Bank* (Norwich, 1900), p. 110.

[3] R. O. Roberts, 'The Old Brecon Bank 1778–1890', *Brycheiniog*, VII (1961), pp. 65–66.

[4] L. S. Pressnell, *Country Banking in the Industrial Revolution* (Oxford, 1954), pp. 344–55.

[5] *The Edinburgh Review*, LII (1816), p. 260.

There is also evidence that 'the rage of farming' after about 1799 attracted some capital from non-farming sources. 'Many individuals from other lines have embarked on the business', it was claimed in 1810.[2] The tenant who sold up at Letty Green, Hertfordshire, in the previous year had been 'Gardner to W. Baker Esq. of Bayford Burry many years but in the year 1800 Corn sold for £5.10.0 per Load or 5 Bushells he left a good place, thought nothing like farming'. Greenhall Farm in the same neighbourhood was successively in the hands of a gentleman farmer, a retired army officer, and a 'member of a long established St Albans' family' between 1799 and 1810.[3] There must have been a good deal of similar activity in other parts of the country, with a correspondingly high rate of failure. Movement both in and out of the farming sector was greatly facilitated by the predominance of tenant farming, the small size of many holdings, and the continued close integration of agriculture and industry. Rents were reported to be falling in northern England in the relatively bad year of 1811, because of capital being 'withdrawn and applied to more profitable branches of trade'.[4] An institutionally imperfect market clearly did not prevent considerable mobility of capital at a regional level, helping in this way to maintain the marginal efficiency of investment.

The consequences upon economic expansion of this large investment in land were very considerable. As Professor Habakkuk has observed, 'the increase in agricultural output is not to be regarded as a precondition of growth, if only because it usually accompanied rather than preceded the acceleration of growth'.[5] Of no period is this generalization truer than of the war period, when the rapid expansion of agriculture contributed so much to the development of internal trade. The extension of cultivation and the diversification of crops meant not merely a bigger output but also the growth of new marketing arrangements; and these, in turn, helped to create a more unified economy. The East Riding became an important source of potatoes for London, parts of Cheshire for Manchester and Liverpool; while the north generally became increasingly dependent upon supplies of potatoes and grain from Scotland. In 1815, when London grain prices fell, 'those dealers on the East Coast of England, who have been constantly in the habit of sending their grain to that market', were 'shipping it by the Hull and other canals across the country; and considerable quantities have of late met us at Manchester, and other markets in the interior'.[1]

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[1] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XVI (1815), p. 469.

[2] *Ibid.*, XI (1810), p. 9.

[3] W. Branch Johnson, *The Carrington Diary* (London, 1956), pp. 33, 47.

[4] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XII (1811), p. 136.

[5] H. J. Habakkuk, 'Historical Experience of Economic Development', *Problems in Economic Development*, E. A. G. Robinson (ed.), (London, 1965), p. 123.

Agricultural expansion also meant a growing demand for iron, building materials, and building labour. By its contribution to a high level of employment, despite periods of dearth, farming helped to maintain the internal demand for consumer goods of all kinds, including that for cheaper fabrics in the form of cottons. The availability of agricultural profits, channelled through the banking system to London, was a fundamental condition of the country's financial strength; while its beneficial effects upon commerce and industry were reinforced by the share of the tax burden shouldered by landowners and farmers. Later in the nineteenth century, when farming became even more intensive and was paralleled by technical developments in industry, agricultural needs were to play an important role in the growth of both the engineering and heavy chemical industries, as well as in the use of shipping space for the import of fertilizers or materials from which fertilizers were made.

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[1] *The Farmer's Magazine*, XVI (1815), p. 124.

E. L. Jones

3 Industrial Capital and Landed Investment: the Arkwrights in Herefordshire, 1809–43

> 'An Estate is but a Pond, but Trade is a Spring.'
> Daniel Defoe

Long before the apparent acceleration of economic growth called the Industrial Revolution the interests and wealth of the law, public office, finance, trade, and industry were entwined with those of the land. Many landowners cashed the industrial potential of their territories, especially where these overlay deposits of minerals; their sons married 'West Indian' heiresses and the dowried daughters of merchants; whilst the juiciest profits of urban enterprise, by a kind of perpetual creaming, sought a final safebank in the purchase and embellishment of landed estates. 'It is hard', writes Professor G. N. Clark of the early eighteenth century, 'to find a class of mere landlords.'[1] Disraeli, not perhaps to be taken literally, but of some weight nevertheless, observed in the Commons that, 'from the days of Sir Robert Walpole to the present moment, with one solitary exception, all those who have realized large fortunes in our great seats of industry have deposited the results of their successful enterprise in the soil of their country'.[2] Political institutions and social values sloughed off their agrarian origins less adroitly than new springs of wealth emerged. Successive waves of self-made men were thus provided with similar motives for assuming the protective camouflage of broad acres.

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[1] *The Wealth of England* (1946), p. 159. In the case of one family whose papers have survived, the Radcliffes of Hitchin Priory, Hertfordshire, one member (a silk merchant in London) sent his brother on the estate a constant flow of advice in the 1720s and 1730s both on what stocks and shares to buy and when to export grain to southern Europe. Delmé Radcliffe Coll., Hertford County Record Office.

[2] Quoted by H. J. Habakkuk, *British and American Technology in the Nineteenth Century* (1962), p. 177 n. 2.

The existence of circumspect but well-trodden stairways to the established reaches of society, the commingling of new cash and old manners, doubtless averted the cleavage between landed and manufacturing interests which threatened under the strain of more rapid industrialization from the middle of the eighteenth century. The processes of economic growth thereafter threw up more and more vigorous, rich industrialists, whose young trade associations Josiah Wedgwood combined in 1785 in the General Chamber of Manufacturers of Great Britain. Yet although the history books concern themselves most with the divisive issues, where pressure groups of this kind clashed with the entrenched agrarian order, the forces of cohesion ultimately triumphed in England. This was very different from the Continent. In the Netherlands, for instance, with the onset of severe agricultural and demographic depression in the provinces round the Zuider Zee about 1650, the merchants of Amsterdam had ceased to finance reclamation of the meers and had withdrawn from their country estates. Thereafter their rural residence was limited to mere summer houses along the road from Utrecht to Amsterdam, or the gilded wooden cottages of Broek-in-Waterland, where a colony of storks could nest on the close-grouped chimneys.[1] The town houses of Amsterdam had become the permanent bases of almost purely urban and wholly mercantile dynasties. In France an exclusive caste of landed aristocratic drones became encysted in society and was removed only by a violent surgery.

But in England no such gulf yawned between town and country, and no final, disruptive break materialized, not even over the 'Great Debate' on free trade. It is true that in eighteenth-century London there emerged an urban *bourgeoisie* who were well-to-do, but in the tighter land market of that century could nevertheless not afford the prestige price of the large landed estate.[2] Yet the economic interests of the truly affluent and most powerful in trade, industry, and land did overlap in England. Moneyed interest and landed interest could not fatally bifurcate in a country where so many great landed proprietors were aware that their true roots lay not in coats of arms cash down, as it were, from the College of Heralds, but in discreet remittances from warehouses, mines, or mills, and where, since socially the landed gentleman was king, so many successful manufacturers would aspire to his crown.

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[1] Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey (ed.), *The Diary of Colonel Peter Hawker*, I (1893), pp. 214, 216.

[2] H. J. Habakkuk, 'The English Land Market in the Eighteenth Century', in J. S. Bromley and E. H. Kossman (eds.), *Britain and the Netherlands* (1960), pp. 172–3.

The political consequences of the involvement of English trade and industry with land are familiar, the economic consequences less so.[1] The early industrialist was making his way of necessity in a predominantly agrarian society. This environment, it may be supposed, was likely to exert strong pressures on his investment behaviour by swaying his personal aspirations. With his factory in a rural setting, with the ultimate social reference group the great landowners, the successful industrialist had every incentive to assimilate to the existing status structure by buying a large block of land. He had perhaps attained his wealthy eminence by novel means and untraditional attitudes, but to fix his children in the social firmament, as to the manner born, he would have to play by the rules of established, landed society. Few families held out long against its leisured, bucolic delights.

As a starting-point in an examination of the industrial and agricultural effects of the flow of industrial wealth back into landed property, a single case is described here of the acquisition of a large estate by one of the outstanding entrepreneurial families of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Arkwrights, cotton spinners. The study runs from the turn of 1808–9, when Richard Arkwright, jun., negotiated to buy the Hampton Court estate, Leominster, Herefordshire, until he died in 1843, when his son, freed from papa's financial oversight, began a more generous era of estate management. This account may find a place in the growing literature on estate administration during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for no study of the initial bargaining for a great estate seems to have been published. But so descriptive an essay is offered mainly because of the intense interest in the business methods of the Arkwrights, an interest equalled until recently only by the paucity of documents concerning them. The material which has now come to light and which it seems desirable to make available to other historians consists of the estate records and many scores of letters to Richard Arkwright, jun., together with drafts of his replies, concerning the purchase and management of the Hampton Court estate. Richard Arkwright's draft letters are indeed a find, because hitherto Arkwright letters have been very scarce.[1] Even this collection is not, unfortunately, complete. There is, for instance, only a single volume of accounts for the period 1809–19, and although thereafter voluminous estate records have been preserved, even these lack overviews of policy and finance. Nevertheless, the economic behaviour and fortunes of such a leading industrial family are worthy of an attempt to squeeze the orange dry. How quickly could a leading industrial family like the Arkwrights succeed in penetrating Hereford county society? What effects did their take-over have on management and agricultural investment on the Hampton Court estate? Did the Arkwrights seek to bring the techniques of the factory floor into the running of landed property? And how does the capital sum they removed into land compare with the growth of capital in the early cotton manufacture?

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[1] Political aspects are treated by G. Kitson Clark, 'The Repeal of the Corn Laws and the Politics of the Forties', *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., IV (1951), pp. 1–13. Economic aspects are discussed most usefully in Habakkuk, *loc. cit.* I am indebted to a more recent discussion by Professor Habakkuk, his summing-up of the conference on 'The Evolution of the Capital Market' held at Nuffield College on 8 Jan. 1964.

I

On the industrial scene the first Richard Arkwright, cotton spinner, sometime barber, knight-to-be, had 'arrived' by about 1775. He was soon involved with land purchases and dealings with his landed neighbours. In 1776 he may have bought the lands round Cromford in Derbyshire, only to part with them for a while in order to release capital for further mill building. This possible temporary withdrawal of investment from land may have coincided with a critical doubling of the capital value of buildings and machinery in the cotton industry from £1 m. to £2 m. during 1783–7.[2] Similarly another cotton master, Samuel Oldknow, when he wanted to extend his factories in 1791 mortgaged an estate he had bought (in 1787) in nearby Mellor and Marple to Richard Arkwright, jun., for £12,000 at 5 per cent. The mortgage did not prevent Oldknow from subsequently buying up farms and land continguous to this estate, all of which finally came into Richard Arkwright's hands in settlement of debts at Oldknow's death in 1828.[1] These transactions do illustrate the fine balance between entry into land and further investment in industry among the leaders of the cotton industry at this time. Probably only exceptional opportunities in manufacturing could induce them to defer the purchase of land, which seemed so desirably safe and prestigious an investment.

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[1] R. S. Fitton and A. P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights* (1958), Appendix C, printed two communications *in extenso*, 'as so few Arkwright letters have survived'. The letters and other documents mainly used here are in the possession of Mr. D. L. Arkwright, of Kinsham Court, Presteign, to whom I am grateful for research facilities and hospitality. The remainder of the Hampton Court Colln. is in the Herefordshire Record Office, in two sections, the first consisting of further family papers deposited by Mr. Arkwright, the second consisting of ledgers and deeds deposited by Lord Hereford, the present occupant of Hampton Court. No useful purpose would be served by loading the present narrative with references to individual letters, especially as the Record Office Colln. has not been finally catalogued. I am most grateful to the staff of the Record Office for commenting on a draft of this essay and supplying additional information.

[2] Fitton and Wadsworth, *op. cit.*, p. 77 (the best source for the Arkwrights' Derbyshire and industrial activities); Phyllis Deane and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth* (1962), p. 262.

In 1789 Sir Richard Arkwright definitely bought, or regained, the land round Cromford and began to erect a residence called Willersley Castle. The house may have reflected the inexperience of the *nouveau riche*; John Byng, Viscount Torrington, who called there during the building in 1790, considered it, 'within and without, an effort of inconvenient ill taste'. Certainly the building was an expensive effort, for a huge rock had to be cleared from the site at a cost of £3,000, road bottoms had to be blasted, grounds laid out, trees planted, a 'prospect' designed. Sir Richard began ostentatiously to build a church at Cromford, and he had already covertly advanced over £6,000 to pay off the gambling debts of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, wife of a local magnate, who still owed the principal to Richard Arkwright, jun., in 1801.[2] Georgiana was not the only embarrassed member of county society to find attractive the opportunity of borrowing from a rich upstart, as the younger Richard Arkwright was to find again when he bought the Herefordshire estate. The Arkwrights learnt that they had not only to 'buy in' to landed society, but to prop up its weaker brethren. Their ability to do so was a distinct asset in a hostile rural environment. Richard Arkwright faced litigation because his father, Sir Richard, had intruded industry brusquely into the countryside, setting up his cotton mill at Bakewell first and reckoning to negotiate afterwards about the interrupted flow of water to the downstream corn mill and trout fishery belonging to the lord of the manor, the Duke of Rutland. Probably it was the secret loan to the Duchess which persuaded the Duke of Devonshire, another opponent of the arrival of industry in the Derbyshire countryside, not to gang up with the Duke of Rutland to prevent it.[3]

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[1] George Unwin, *Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights* (1924), pp. 140, 202.

[2] Earl of Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana* (1955), p. 155.

[3] M. H. Mackenzie, 'The Bakewell Cotton Mill and the Arkwrights', *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society*, LXXIX (1959), pp. 62–64, 74.

When Sir Richard Arkwright died in 1792 he left his only son, Richard Arkwright, jun. (b. 1755), the bulk of a fortune estimated at 'little short of half a million' and 'manufactories the income of which is greater than that of most German principalities'.[1] The younger Arkwright completed Willersley on his father's death and moved there from the house next to the cotton mill at Bakewell which his father had given him long before and where he had founded a semi-independent business fortune. There, still close to the springs of the cotton manufacture, he stayed until he died in 1843, 'probably the richest commoner' in the country.[2] But despite the aptitude and inclination of the younger Arkwright for industrial organization, that he should also wish to acquire extensive landed properties is unsurprising. His friends and business associates, such as Oldknow, the Strutts, and the Cromptons, had done the same; the principal figures of their Derbyshire neighbourhood, the titled proprietors, derived much of their prestige from holding large estates. Arkwright was as rich as, or richer than, any of the manufacturers and could aspire to grander territorial amibitions, even if the narrow land market of the French wars set the price high and obliged him to scatter his estates in unfashionable counties. He himself would not let go the reins of his cotton empire, but his wealth, his milieu, and doubtless the desires of his family all prompted extensive investment in land. After all, in the private opinion of the Duchess of Devonshire, to whom he had been kind, he was a simple, benevolent and rich man, and as such would seek to indulge his sons.

During the wars Arkwright seems to have been seeking means of diversifying his interests. In 1804, for example, he took a partnership in the Wirksworth bank. Similarly, he set money aside to enable his sons to climb into landed circles. Like Sir Robert Peel, sen., another cotton master, and William Crawshay, the iron master, both of whom likewise bought estates, he had large holdings in the funds. This was a sound move for anyone contemplating the purchase of land, for the funds required no management and were easily realizable, and while they yielded less than industry, they earned more meanwhile than land.[3] Thus one of Arkwright's sons was to follow him as Arkwright of Willersley. Another son was installed at Sutton Scarsdale, also in Derbyshire, a third at Mark Hall, Essex, and Normanton Turville, Leicestershire, a fourth at Hampton

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[1] Fitton and Wadsworth, *op. cit.*, quoting *Gentleman's Magazine* (1792), pp. 770–1.

[2] *Annual Register*, LXXXV (1843), p. 252.

[3] Habakkuk, *British and American Technology*, pp. 72–73.

Court, Herefordshire, while a fifth farmed at Dunstall, Staffordshire. The family exposed its sons to the alternative scholastic embers of Eton and Christchurch or Harrow and Trinity College, Cambridge, and spread their activities into local government, Parliament, the Church, and the law, all most respectable in the eyes of Society. The outlying members of the network were in any case too distant to play an active rôle in the cotton business, even had they wished. They were to be branches of a landed dynasty.

From July 1808 Arkwright noticed newspaper advertisements offering for sale an estate at Hampton Court, Leominster. He might have balked at buying property in Herefordshire, which was notoriously difficult to develop because of poor communications with the adjacent English counties.[1] Yet in itself the county was fruitful and attractive. The mansion at Hampton Court was set by the River Lugg, in lush meadows between wooded hills, surrounded with all the paraphernalia of a miniature kingdom, and amidst an estate where the notably diverse farming typical of Herefordshire was carried on: breeding Hereford cattle, breeding sheep, growing wheat, barley, pulses, hops, fruit, and other crops. More pertinent, a would-be buyer like Arkwright would have had to search hard to find another seller with an estate of over 6,000 acres to offer like Lord Essex, who had not even visited Hampton Court for a couple of years, had acquired it in the first place only by marrying into the Coningsbys, who preferred his own seat at Little Cassiobury, Hertfordshire, and who moreover was moderately short of ready cash to rebuild his own house. The Coningsbys had encumbered some of their manors with debt charges[2] and Lord Essex would apparently feel relieved to be rid of the estate. He seems to have sold outlying Herefordshire lands during the 1790s and he was selling properties closer in to Hampton Court in 1807.[3] His agent had left no fallows and sown almost no forage crops on the home farm at Hampton Court from 1805 or 1806, which suggests that a plan had been formed about that date to sell the whole estate and to take as much out of it as possible in the meantime.

Not until 5 December 1808 did Arkwright bring himself to act.

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[1] See my 'Agricultural Conditions and Changes in Herefordshire, 1660–1815', *Transactions of the Woolhope Club*, XXXVII (1961), pp. 33–36, 49.

[2] Coningsby deeds, Hereford City Library Local Colln. 9218(10).

[3] Berington Collection, Worcestershire Record Office, 705:24/1380. Lord Essex therefore found Hampton Court personally uninviting, while he had pulled down his Restoration house at Cassiobury in 1800 and needed to pay for the Gothic mansion by James Wyatt which replaced it. Arthur Ponsonby, *John Evelyn* (London, 1933), pp. 289–90 n.

He then wrote to a partner in his London bank, Pole, Thornton & Co., to ask him to act as agent in the prospective purchase of the estate. This man, John Smith, was an excellent choice as intermediary—as discreet as his name, a thorough worker, and prepared if need be to pump anyone's employees about their master's business. Arkwright asked him to obtain an assurance from Lord Essex that the estate would not be sold yet awhile, not until Arkwright had viewed it anonymously, for 'of course, you will not mention my name'. Smith quickly discovered that another prospective purchaser was actually negotiating for the estate and he suspected (accurately as it turned out) that this was Sacheverell Chandos Pole, who was fortunately a Derbyshire man, too, and whose credit Arkwright was therefore well placed to assess. Arkwright indeed reckoned Pole to be a poor competitor, and he promptly applied for the refusal of the estate himself. Smith had an interview with Lord Essex and reported he had been told,

> that Mr. Pole would be obliged to sell all his Derbyshire property which would delay the payment of the purchase money. I remarked in answer that my friend was quite able to pay for any estate he might contract for, and though I was not authorized to say so I felt confident he would not require many months to pay the purchase of this large property perhaps not many days. Ld E—was very much struck with this remark and said that would be very convenient indeed. His Lordship said that . . . £235,000 included the Timber, and every thing without exception. Wine Books Plate &c &c &c. In short that a Purchaser might go down, and commence Housekeeping the day he arrived.

Arkwright concurred. It would be convenient to step into a ready-equipped country mansion, and he was aware that he would be bargaining from strength in offering to pay on the nail. To avoid tedious manoeuvring he would hand over the whole of an agreed price immediately.

Arkwright now thought Pole was no longer a serious or active rival and he therefore set off to view the estate. Having seen it, he was inclined to look unfavourably on the household effects, but still keen enough to buy the entire property. He set about obtaining an accurate valuation, commissioning a surveyor himself, receiving a copy of the valuation made for Pole as a very unusual favour from Pole's surveyor, acquiring two more from potential buyers who had conclusively dropped out of the running, and obtaining a fifth through Smith, who quite by chance had a hold over another surveyor. When Arkwright came to compare these valuations he found them unsatisfactory in detail. One surveyor had gleaned his information about rentable values merely from conversations with tenants, which in Arkwright's eyes 'hardly seems sufficient to enter an agreement upon'. Nevertheless, the valuations as a body helped him to a decision, and on the last day of 1808 he offered Lord Essex £220,000 for the estate, the money to be paid on Lady Day next on receipt of a completed title. So sure was Arkwright that no one else would match his offer of instant payment that he set the price below the totals of the valuations, all of which had assumed part payment on mortgage over a number of years. He was confident enough to draft a complete proposal of terms of purchase, and wrote, 'I do not like dodging . . . I hope the offer will be accepted or rejected in *one week.*'

What gain did Arkwright anticipate on this outlay? The formal valuations had ranged from £235,000 to £301,844 for the house, the equipment of the estate, and approximately 6,000 acres of land. The valuation which he had himself commissioned was the one to which he gave most weight. This suggested £261,749, but checking the property parcel by parcel Arkwright concluded that the true figure on the assumed values should be £264,444. He preferred his own arithmetic. On his offer of £220,000 he therefore stood to gain £44,444 at once on capital value, plus a substantial sum from a perfectly feasible upgrading of the rent roll. In addition, the estate would be a social asset and a safe investment for his posterity, though he did not apparently think that good reason for paying a fancy price. He was more conscious that the annual cash return would be less than he was accustomed to from non-agricultural investments. Indeed, in a fit of depression at one stage of the negotiations he wrote,

> I feel as if the 11,000£ a year, was quite as snug where it is, as if the money was vested in an estate, bringing in with no little trouble about half the sum, clear of outgoings.

This implies that he was receiving about 5 per cent in the funds, whereas the estate would not only cost forty years' purchase and require an effort of management, but would return only 2½ per cent.

Before Arkwright could receive a reply to his offer he heard from Smith that Pole, who was, in fact, still in some obscure way committed to making an offer for the estate, had revealed to Lord Essex that Arkwright was the anonymous bidder. This Arkwright took to be a device whereby Pole could escape his own obligation to negotiate. When Arkwright's identity stood revealed, Lord Essex abruptly refused his offer, while trying to tempt him to advance. And Smith felt obliged to warn Arkwright that Lord Essex might still obtain £230,000 or £240,000 if he sold off the estate in small lots.

Outwardly, Arkwright's stand was firm. He would not advance. Before Smith could convey this rejoinder he had a surprise visit from Lord Essex's agent to say that an offer of £240,000 for the estate had been received from a syndicate headed by a wool stapler from the Borough. Smith commented, 'I suspect the party in question are hard jobbers who must sell before they can pay'; that is, speculators who would borrow the purchase price and recoup by dismembering the estate for resale—exactly the kind of competing purchasers whom Smith had feared. Arkwright thereupon gave up all hope of the estate, and on 14 January 1809 he wrote valedictorily to Smith, thanking him for his services.

At this date winter snows delayed the Derbyshire mails, and for a space Arkwright heard no more. Nine days later he wrote again to Smith instructing him to invest £40,000 at 3 and 4 per cent, 'as I have now a considerable sum of money, for which I shall have no occasion'. On the very brink of buying land he had been holding ready cash as a lever in bargaining. He asked wistfully whether the Hampton Court sale were completed. Smith did not reply at once, and when another nine days had elapsed Arkwright revealed something of his secret ambitions by inquiring earnestly whether or not Lord Essex had sold. This produced a reply from Smith to the effect that the prospective sale to the syndicate was hanging fire and that Arkwright might be well advised to examine the estate again. The offer of a ready £220,000 was immediately repeated, for Arkwright remained convinced that this should be an effective bid, but he agreed with Smith that were it once again to be refused he would revisit the estate to see if he could not persuade himself to make a higher offer.

The closing play of the match is revealed in less detail. Lord Essex once more refused £220,000, but tossed Smith a hint that £230,000 might be acceptable. Arkwright could not convince himself that the property was of any greater value, but going over the ground again he found such charm that he instructed Smith to go up to £225,000 rather than lose it. Soon after, he rose to the required £230,000, at which sum Lord Essex clinched the deal in February 1809. At the margin considerations other than those of maximum financial profit clearly motivated

Arkwright's action, although he had acted the hard businessman most of the way.

Troublesome, but minor, disputes over the transaction were still to come. Lord Essex and his agent, Mr. Tanner (who occupied the home farm on his own account), both left loopholes in their agreements for subsequent haggling with Arkwright, frustrating his countermoves by withholding necessary information. Long after the sale Tanner was making outrageous demands for further payments on account of livestock which he claimed (without, however, being able to produce a satisfactory list) to have left behind on the home farm. Lord Essex was covering repeated depredations on the library, china room, and portrait gallery at Hampton Court with disingenuous protestations that he had assumed he would be able to return for personal effects. The sourest taste in Arkwright's mouth was left by a subsequent legal battle with Lord Essex over the apportionment of the costs of enclosing common lands at Bodenham, where the enclosure had inconveniently been in progress during the sale. Both Lord Essex and Mr. Tanner overdid their demands, so that at last Arkwright was driven to write bitterly (and revealingly) to their solicitor:

> I shall close this subject for the present, by merely observing to you, that if I had not been accustomed by long habit, to investigate what *some* may call *trifling* matters I should never have purchased H.C.

The last, ludicrous claim was put in by Lady Essex's heirs as late as 1837, when Arkwright was an old man. This claim hinged on a supposed mistake by a copying clerk and was for the value of timber felled between February 1809 and Lady Day that year. Nothing seems to have come of it, and these irritating rear-guard actions apart, Richard Arkwright had been in secure possession of the estate from Lady Day 1809, when some of the farms were re-let on his behalf.[1] At the time of the sale the estate showed signs of recent mismanagement. Tenants were in arrear with their rents, old grassland had recently been ploughed out, young timber had been destroyed by browsing stock. This state of affairs, coupled with the further unreasonable demands of Lord Essex and Mr. Tanner, led Arkwright to seek arbitration for deductions. In the end the price was reduced to £226,535, plus £2,200 to Tanner for stock left on the home farm.

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[1] The property into which Arkwright thus entered may be summarized from the abstract of the conveyance to him, dated July 1810, as 6,221 acres in twenty manors, Hampton Court house itself, four advowsons, tithes in several parishes, woods in five parishes, twenty-nine farms, a large number of cottages and houses, some mills and some other miscellaneous buildings proper to a large estate.

What can be learnt of Arkwright's business attitudes and methods from this account of the transaction? It is hazardous to deduce much about his motives in buying the estate, but it is clear that he was a hard bargainer. Arkwright occasionally displayed his dislike of Lord Essex's languid, unbusinesslike ways. He detested Tanner's dissimulation (though he was not above a trick or two himself) and quickly replaced him with a bailiff of his own from Derbyshire. Arkwright was prepared to take some personal pains, as far as his knowledge of the land allowed, to assure himself of the estate's long-term worth, in contrast with the lackadaisical ways of other would-be purchasers. He employed the best 'professional Gentlemen' to conduct his business—for example, Edward Wakefield, the Pall Mall land agent and father of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, was retained to collect the rents from all his estates. Arkwright demanded order and meticulousness: when Tanner admitted to having no records of the farm stock he observed, 'it is somewhat singular . . . Men of business generally take care to have written documents to refer to.' That is what Arkwright was, a man of business. He was able to temper his evident desire to own this particular property with stern calculation. He played by strict, if individual, rules, on the one hand concealing his identity and his wealth and seeking information by the back door, but on the other refusing to beat the price down by denigrating Hampton Court and forbidding Smith to haggle for the lowest price. A shrewd, decisive man, Arkwright was eager to insert himself, or rather his sons, into the higher reaches of landed society, but for him an estate had also to be a fair investment. Arkwright bargained less closely than he would seemingly have done in his industrial rôle, but far more narrowly than the established country gentleman.

2

Richard Arkwright did not himself settle in Herefordshire, but his family had little or no difficulty in finding acceptance in the society of the county. Former industrial families had already succeeded in penetrating this most rural of shires—the Knights and the Foleys, both ironmasters, had done so. Apparently the Herefordshire landed proprietors were free of the suspicion which the Arkwrights had encountered in their Derbyshire neighbours, the Dukes of Rutland and Devonshire. Certainly the Duke of Norfolk wrote at once from his seat at Holme Lacy to welcome Arkwright to Herefordshire, inviting him and any friends to dine, and offering a few does to replenish the run-down stock in the Hampton Court deer park. For a manufacturing family the Arkrights were rather oddly but most conveniently placed, being both Anglican and Tory. John Arkwright, the one of Richard's sons who was installed at Hampton Court in 1819, had been at Cambridge and was sufficiently acceptable to be appointed High Sheriff of Herefordshire in 1831. It was an exceptionally churlish local landowner who in 1833 still referred to Richard Arkwright as 'a tradesman'.[1] Another neighbouring family, the Beringtons, not only mixed socially with the Arkwrights right from the start but were soon to solicit and obtain a loan from Richard Arkwright.

The estate was by no means in the pink of condition. In many ways it was ripe for development. Hampton Court house itself was old, rambling, and built in a motley of styles. As late as 1828 a neighbouring diarist observed that it 'would require a fortune to put into repair, and then would only be fit for a Prince to live in'.[2] Tanner had let the home farm run down. The tenanted farms were out of repair and not always fully equipped to deal with the wide range of products typical of local agriculture. In the 1820s, for example, there was still at Houghton farm 'no Granary except Bed Rooms, no Room for the management of hops after drying except Bedchambers'. To render the estate in full repair would have necessitated a major outlay, to modernize it an enormous one. No improvements other than some petty exchanges of intermixed farmland had been made since a survey of 1786 and 1787 by the London firm of Nathaniel Kent, Claridge and Pearce had uncovered serious defects, notably the small and intermingled nature of the farms. There was an untidy and ill-defined hangover of communal husbandry, such as the surviving Lot Meadows along the Lugg. The whole fixed capital of the estate, Arkwright discovered, the water carriage, flood-gates, fences, field gates, 'indeed everything about the farm, Park &c. have been shamefully neglected, and of course are out of repair'.

The management of the estate from 1809 to 1819, particularly from 1815, turned into mainly a holding operation. At first, not wishing to live there, Arkwright 'determined to reduce the stock of Deer very considerably, and to take other steps to reduce the expenses of the establishment.' He planned to keep the property as a home for one of his sons. Nevertheless, such outlay as he did make was acutely sensitive to the economic draughts which blew in the deflation after 1815, and possibly even earlier, in the manufacturing crisis of 1811. The agent's memoranda from 1820 reveal such a poor state of buildings on the tenanted farms as to indicate that Arkwright had undertaken no general renovation after his purchase. Early in 1811, when his neighbour Thomas Berington of Winsley pressed him for a loan of £2,000 linked in some way to exchanges of land which would rationalize holdings on their contiguous estates, Arkwright consented only reluctantly, insisted on limiting the loan to twelve months, and added:

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[1] Select Committee on Agriculture (1833), *Report*, reply to Q.8473.

[2] John Biddulph's diary, 2 August 1828, Hereford City Library Local Colln.

> you are, no doubt, well aware that money can not be very abundant, as every one must, more or less, feel the effect of the general distress in the Mercantile part of the community; but . . . I will accommodate you.

By 1815 Berington owed him £2,472 and Arkwright was urgently requesting repayment. In the twenties Berington's estate affairs were in such difficulty that he could still not repay and Richard Arkwright was pressing him very hard, until John Arkwright, now resident at Hampton Court and more sensitive to local social niceties, intervened on Berington's behalf.[1] And in 1815, too, Arkwright appears to have refused to lend £10,000 to his Leominster solicitor, who had been speculating in Herefordshire land and had much left on his hands by the postwar depression of the market. This was a local loan which Arkwright would probably have made in the more buoyant years of war.

Not only did Arkwright become much tighter about lending in the agricultural slump at the end of the Napoleonic wars, but he retrenched expenditure on his own estate, too. In 1811 he had begun to develop the estate, starting with a programme of draining the lands in hand. He had constructed a new water carriage and stepped up the work year by year until 1814. Then in 1815 and 1816 the programme was severely slashed, although renewed in the temporary recovery of agriculture in 1817. Similarly, spending on all estate work had been expanded from the time of purchase until a sudden, sharp contraction in 1815–16, and likewise had begun to recover in 1817.

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[1] Worcs. R. O.: 705: 24/1409.

Table 1. Expenditure on estate labour at Hampton Court, Herefordshire, 1809–17

	Total expenditure on labour	Expenditure on labour for land draining
1809	£ 392	£ 0
1810	517	0
1811	783	42
1812	1,189	68
1813	1,184	95
1814	1,012	208
1815	344	37
1816	351	37
1817	600	261

Source: Constructed from data in Disbursements Book 'A' of Richard Arkwright, Hampton Court Collection, Herefordshire Record Office. 1809 adjusted to simulate a full year of Arkwright occupation. Figures rounded to nearest £.

Until the end of 1814 (when he gave the land for a new road over Dinmore Hill, 'the formidable obstacle which has so long impeded our communication with the northern parts of the county and the kingdom')[1] Richard Arkwright thus showed a moderate degree of interest in the improvement of his Herefordshire property. But in 1815 and 1816 he drastically pruned even estate maintenance expenditure, although in November 1815 he did pay his tenants' share of the property tax as a concession to their distress.[2] He spent more freely again in the mild optimism of 1817, but by 1820 Edward Wakefield, collecting the rents, was causing general alarm by distraining a few tenants and taking 'Judgement Bonds' from any who were at all in arrears.[3] Arkwright attempted in addition to cash some of the assets of the estate. In February 1821 he engaged with William Stoveld, timber merchant and banker of Petworth, Sussex, for a big fall of timber at Hampton Court, and £8,000 from this source was in his hands by June. The contract

[1] *Hereford Journal*, 4 Jan. 1815.

[2] *Ibid.*, 8 Nov. 1815.

[3] Worcs. R.O.: 705: 24/1393.

was tightly enough drawn to make Stoveld dizzy with apprehension about what was in essence a perfectly normal transaction; this extreme caution on Arkwright's part may have been due to the uneasiness which his steward, Edward Wakefield, felt about the economic situation that year.[1] But this attempt to enable the estate finances to withstand the agricultural depression came comparatively late.

Other landowners, more involved personally with their petty kingdoms than Arkwright, seem to have been quicker to fell timber or to draw on reserves in order to brace themselves and (through remittances of rent or written-off rent arrears) to cushion their tenants against the shock of the postwar slump. Their expenditure might fall in the prolonged disillusion of the 1820s, but unless they were trapped (as the Beringtons were) between, on the one hand, urban creditors who did not allow for the state of agriculture and on the other the unpaid rents of their farm tenants, landowners usually made some effort to bear the burden of the early slumps themselves.[2] Arkwright was different; he drew in his horns like the more embarrassed of the lesser gentry, not facing the first onslaught of the depression in the generous manner expected of a territorial magnate accustomed to the temporary hesitations and difficulties of agricultural markets. Arkwright's reaction was hardly the result, as it was in cases like the Beringtons', of dire necessity, but presumably he automatically applied the brakes of an industrialist faced with falling returns. His economies, though not severe enough to cripple his tenants, were perhaps inappropriate to agriculture, where tenant farmers with satisfactory stock, credit, and local experience were not easily replaced if once they had been pushed out of farming.

After 1819, when John Arkwright was settled at Hampton Court, local needs were more generously assessed. Richard's son, however, tended to the extreme of personal extravagance in his younger days. His first wish was for a gracious country abode, and in order to improve Hampton Court to his taste he was always asking his father for remittances. From 1819 to 1822 he received sums totalling £40,000, and these were by no means the last. He may, however, have spent this money on trivial decorations, as alterations to the fabric of the house did not begin until 1834 and were then quite modest.

Less cautious than his father, John Arkwright secured from him a much higher investment in the Herefordshire property than Richard, as an absentee landowner, would himself have contemplated. John Arkwright took to employing 150 labourers on an irrigation project during the early 1830s as a way of countering winter unemployment. John also interceded with his father during the 1820s and 1830s on behalf of the hard-pressed tenantry. These men hung on, incapable of improving their farms, late with the rent, waiting for the harvest or the hop sales or the cider-apple picking so that they could pay something on account. They obtained concessions through John Arkwright, who sympathized with them because his own running of the home farm was similarly leaking away his father's money. Abatements of 10 per cent or 15 per cent of the rent were frequent.

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[1] Contract in Timber Book, Hampton Court Colln.; Wakefield's evidence in Select Committee . . . Agriculture, *Report* (1821) especially pp. 206–7.

[2] Discussion in my unpublished D. Phil. thesis, 'The Evolution of High Farming, 1815–65' (Oxford, 1962).

Richard Arkwright had become rather reluctant to acquire any more land, at least outside Derbyshire.[1] Against odds, John persuaded his father to bid for the Berington property when, like so many others, it was forced onto the market by the deflationary pressures of the twenties. When the bid failed Richard could not be induced to try again.[2] During the twenties and thirties the Arkwrights bought only a few cottages and isolated fields in Herefordshire, and did not seriously enter the local land market again until 1837, when agricultural prospects brightened. John Arkwright might have influenced his father more decisively had he displayed a more active interest in farming. As it was, until about 1840 he was prepared to keep the estate's agriculture marking time, although even marking time, in the postwar years, required assistance from the landowner's purse. Thereafter John Arkwright became an ardent agricultural 'improver', encouraged by letters from his brothers Charles in Staffordshire and the Rev. Joseph in Essex,[3] and by his brother-in-law Chandos Wren Hoskyns, author of *Talpa, the chronicles of a clay farm*. The wherewithal to quieten the tenantry and increase John Arkwright's comforts, and now the capital for his improvement schemes, came as subsidies from Richard Arkwright's industrial profits.

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[1] In 1821 he had run the risk that if the timber merchant, Stoveld, defaulted on his contract he would have had the additional responsibility of receiving in settlement Stoveld's freehold estates, valued at £12,000, far away in Sussex. In 1826 he bought the Sutton Scarsdale estate in Derbyshire, on which his son Robert settled. J. J. Rowley, 'The Farming of Derbyshire', *Journal of the Royal Agricultural Society of England*, XIV (1853), pp. 34, 49.

[2] Worcs. R.O.: 705: 24/1409.

[3] Joseph was one of Trollope's originals. A. L. Drummond, *The Churches in English Fiction* (1950), p. 84.

3

When Richard Arkwright died in 1843 his sons received handsome legacies. John found that the book debt to his father which he had incurred at Hampton Court during the 1820s and 1830s was liquidated and he gained £261,000 in addition. He embarked on a systematic remodelling of the estate, bought land to extend or help ring-fence the property, undertook the subsoil draining which was so fashionable in the forties, and as a result attracted notice as an agricultural enthusiast.[1] He took a house each year for the Royal Show, at Exeter or Norwich or Southampton. He visited the annual Smithfield Show, ending the day with a visit to the opera. On these semi-agricultural, semi-social occasions he met his brothers, his brother-in-law, and old acquaintances like the Strutts and the Cromptons, themselves families which were forsaking industrial interests for rural ones. The Arkwright brothers were certainly becoming detached from the industry which had launched them. Robert, for example, was trying unsuccessfully to sell his cotton mill during the depression of the early 1840s, and was finally obliged to let it at a low rent; he did not contemplate running it himself, being absorbed in improver's work on his estate at Sutton Scarsdale.[2] John himself tended to invest his capital in the funds and railway companies. Soon the most obvious reminder of the *fons et origo* of their wealth was merely the hank of cotton, argent, on the crest of each of the landed brothers. An enormous capital had come with the Arkwrights and their circle out of industry into the less profitable business of administering landed estates.

Richard Arkwright's will had assigned his sons sums of between £40,000 and £100,000 each, besides numerous and substantial bequests to grandchildren and others. His sons in addition received the residue of his assets, so that John Arkwright actually obtained—after his book debts had been liquidated—a total of £261,000. The residue alone of Richard Arkwright's property was sworn to exceed £1 m., at which point the scale of the stamp duties ceased.[3] There is thus no certain means of calculating the true size of his fortune. Nevertheless, John Arkwright actually received over five times his nominal legacy of £50,000 and if the (admittedly hazardous) assumption is made that the real total received by the remaining sons all exceeded their specific

[1] *Hereford Journal*, 27 Nov. 1844.
[2] Rowley, *loc. cit.*, pp. 34, 49; Mackenzie, *loc. cit.*, p. 69.
[3] *Annual Register, loc. cit.*, p. 253.

legacies by the same factor of five, Arkwright would have left a fortune of over £1½ m. If the value of Hampton Court is any guide, the five or six landed estates included among his assets might have been worth a further £1 m. This estimate is very little more than a guess, but it does seem to establish the general proposition that a very high proportion of Richard Arkwright's industrial profits had already ended up in landed property by his death. Again, if John Arkwright's behaviour were typical of his brothers, much of Richard Arkwright's liquid assets was transferred to his sons' estates soon after his death. Such a flow of capital from industry into land (almost one-quarter of a million pounds on the initial purchase of Hampton Court alone) was very considerable indeed.

The agricultural effects of the Arkwright family's movement into land were at first less forceful than might have been anticipated, partly because they coincided with the post-Napoleonic deflation, but in the main because Richard Arkwright was a reluctant spender on poor agricultural investments. The social ambitions of his sons countered his caution to some extent, but it was only with the new enthusiasm for farming after 1837, and more particularly after Richard's death in 1843, that they were able to spend heavily on fashionable agricultural improvements. There is no sign that in the early days the Arkwrights introduced any novel technology into the farming of their estates, although their estate book-keeping was sophisticated and perhaps owed something to industrial experience. If Richard Arkwright, whose personal interest in farming and in his more distant properties was none too great, had not himself lived so long, and had the post-Napoleonic deflation not intervened, it is probable that agricultural investment by the Arkwright family would have been much more vigorous.

A suspicion may be entertained that his purchases of land were, however, so vast that they restricted the flexibility of Richard Arkwright's whole range of investments. Between the funds and industry he could switch much of his accumulated profit with relative ease, but once into land on a big scale he could not readily withdraw. The Hampton Court estate certainly became a drain, both because of the parlous state of its agriculture after 1815 and through the finance which John Arkwright needed personally to be able to mix with the highest county society. The whole history of Richard Arkwright's involvement with his Herefordshire estate is one of nice balance, or near-conflict, between long-run social ambition and short-run financial interest. He hestitated, and then agreed only with stringent conditions, to lend to Berington in 1811; he would not accept land as security for a loan to lawyer Coleman in 1815; he swiftly retrenched spending on his own estate in 1815–16; and during the twenties and thirties he would not improve the tenanted farms wholesale or much extend his holding of land in Herefordshire. Only John Arkwright's demands for subventions and pleas on behalf of the tenants led Richard to make irregular investments in his Herefordshire offshoot or to forgo the proceeds, and very occasionally to buy a little land or undertake some agricultural scheme. All in all, Richard Arkwright seems to have lacked the ready policy of investment in his land that one would expect of a rich, new entrant to an estate. He was not so possessed of spare capital, or so abandoned, as to invest freely in both agriculture and industry when economic prospects were temporarily poor.

Beyond this, materials with which to demonstrate the effects on the Arkwright cotton concerns of their phased withdrawal of resources into land are lacking. It seems that Richard Arkwright's sons quietly avoided or gradually withdrew from active participation in the cotton manufacture. If, however, the precise consequences of their withdrawal of capital from industry cannot be calculated, some attempt may at least be made to show how the purchase price of the Hampton Court estate compared with current annual investment in the cotton industry. Available figures on capital formation in British industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century are very approximate, but at least they indicate the orders of magnitude. Accepting the published figures at their face value, it would seem that Richard Arkwright spent on the one fixed investment of Hampton Court a sum equivalent to approximately 30 per cent of the total annual investment in the cotton industry. This is quite apart from any working capital needed at once on the estate and anything he may have been spending on landed properties elsewhere, such as at Willersley Castle. At this date, 1809, cotton was a leading sector of the economy, producing approximately 40 per cent of the declared annual value of all domestic exports.[1] Furthermore, Professor Pollard, who argues that the real problem of the early industrialists was in finding circulating capital to hold stocks and carry work in progress, regards the cotton industry as the one exception in which fixed capital investment was the main component. In the up-to-date cotton mill between 1780 and 1830 fixed capital represented a fraction more than 50 per cent of the total capital invested. The cost of Hampton Court therefore equalled nearly 60 per cent of the annual investment of fixed capital in the entire cotton industry. A comparison

[1] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

of the capital cost of the Hampton Court estate with national investment in the cotton industry is shown in the following table.

Table 2. Capital cost of the Hampton Court estate compared with capital invested in the national cotton industry, 1809

Final purchase price of the Hampton Court estate	= *c.* £229,000
Annual investment in buildings and machinery in the cotton industry	= max. £400,000
Annual investment in circulating capital in the cotton industry	= max. below £400,000

Source: Hampton Court Collection; Deane and Cole, *British Economic Growth* (1962), p. 262; S. Pollard, 'Fixed Capital in the Industrial Revolution in Britain', *Journ. Econ. Hist.*, XXIV (1964), p. 302.

The achievement of the period 1780 to 1800, according to Deane and Cole, was a rise in the rate of annual capital formation from 5 or 6 per cent to approximately 7 per cent, although it is doubtful whether this level was maintained during the remainder of the Napoleonic wars and their aftermath. Even that rise was small compared with the major upturn, in cotton as in other sectors, after 1830. As yet, however, there is no special reason to associate the check in the rising rate of capital formation with the maturing desire of 'new men' like the Arkwrights to opt out of industry into land. But in view of the scale of Arkwright's transfer of capital in that direction such a relationship is not impossible.

4

How widespread was the desire among manufacturers to enter landed society? William Cobbett in his *Rural Rides* rages against the replacement of old-established landowners by merchants, stock-jobbers, and industrialists. This turnover was, of course, nothing new, but part of what he saw was the flare-up of the land market between 1820 and 1829, when landed proprietors nearing defeat in the depression of arable farming sold out in bigger numbers to men who had made fortunes by speculations and other enterprises.[1] New entrants came from many industries, sometimes acquiring land by marrying into the landed gentry and from time to time into the aristocracy, more often by straightforward purchase. The move was made, 'by the Darbys from iron, Matthew Boulton from engineering, the Peels, Arkwrights, Fieldens and Strutts from cotton, Marshall from flax, the Ridleys, Cooksons and Cuthberts from coal, or Samuel Whitbread from brewing'.[1] The exodus of manufacturers from a single industry, iron-making, during the eighteenth century may be seen in the account given by Professor T. S. Ashton.[2] Two of Ambrose Crowley's daughters married baronets and John Crowley's daughter captured the Earl of Ashburnham. 'The same path was trodden by the Foleys, who became barons in the eighteenth century, by the Wortleys, from whom have descended the Earls of Wharncliffe, by the Hardys of Low Moor, afterwards Earls of Cranbrook, and by the Guests, from whom Lord Wimborne springs; while one of the legitimated daughters of Lord Wilkinson married a Legh and became the mother of the first Lord Newton.' Only the Quaker ironmasters stood aside, for they would not marry 'out of the Society', so that there was for them, 'thus no tendency towards the dissipation of capital'. But once the adherents of freer religious sects had become landowners, 'the ladder of iron by which they had mounted was kicked away', not always without agonizing personal readjustments.

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[1] *Rural Rides*, Everyman edn. *passim*, but especially pp. 303–4.

The characteristic industrialist entering rural society wanted to make more of an impression than Richard Arkwright himself did—to seal his new status with new heights of splendour in his residence, extensive landscaping in his park and projects of improvement on his farms. Those for whom some information is available seem to have been more ardent 'improvers' than average established landed proprietors. The 'Society of Agriculture at Manchester' had among its subscribers in 1793 Robert Peel and Samuel Oldknow, both cotton men, and nominally at least James Watt.[3] Mr. Wilkes and the Peel family spent £138,000 of their profits from Manchester cotton manufacture on buying an estate at Tamworth about 1789, installing five steam engines and according to Robert Bakewell, a good enough authority, making 'other improvements better worth notice than at any place I have yet seen'. Samuel Oldknow farmed very lavishly on his Bottoms Hall estate at Mellor and

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[1] F. M. L. Thompson, *English Landed Society in the Nineteenth Century* (1963), p. 21. For more extensive lists of new entrants from industry see *ibid.*, *passim*, and G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1963), pp. 102–5.

[2] *Iron and Steel in the Industrial Revolution* (1963 edn.), pp. 217–18.

[3] Unwin, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

Marple from 1788, and in 1813 was noticed as possessing the only machine-driven pump in Derbyshire for irrigation purposes. He was, in fact, pumping urine from the privies of his factory and apprentice house at Mellor on to his meadows, thus anticipating a practice more commonly associated with the third quarter of the nineteenth century. John Wilkinson, ironmaster, undertook arduous reclamations in Denbighshire and the Lancashire mosses, and early introduced steam threshing machines. Marshall of Leeds bought Patrington in the East Riding and was laying an elaborate tile-drain network there 'under the direction of Mr. Josiah Parkes' in the late 1840s. On a smaller scale Richard Beech left Manchester textiles in 1805 at the age of 36 to retire to Eccleshall, Staffordshire, where he continued to prosper by lending on mortgage to the neighbouring gentry. He also busied himself farming, and experimented with a cultivator on his own land.[1] There are other examples. The essential point is that these men whose wealth originated in the factory or the forge invested heavily in agriculture and pioneered improved techniques on their farms.

Land, however, earned them less than the growth industries. There were respectable rewards for agricultural 'improvement', notably during the high-price period of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, but no one expected the total investment in a landed estate to pay high dividends. Essentially, landed property offered a secure and desirable investment for the man with dynastic ambitions. The price for the social advantages and long-run prospects of landownership was the acceptance of a cash profit 1 per cent or 1½ per cent lower even than investment in the funds or mortgages, and several per cent less than direct investment in industry. An estate did not run itself. As recruits to landed society, therefore, erstwhile industrialists 'managed their property and they spent their incomes, and a history of management and of consumption forms the most important part of their economic history'.[2] Much of the money which passed out of industry into land was squandered on prodigious bouts of port-drinking, on assemblies, race meetings, fox-hunts, pheasant battues. Resources were dissipated on unproductive activities like the gyrations of armies of flunkeys, the sonorities of private chapel building, the ordered informality of landscape gardening, the contrived futility of mock ruins and follies. A share of industrially created wealth constantly disappeared in these bonfires of good living for a small, landed class or was immobilized in their ornaments.

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[1] H. C. Pawson, *Robert Bakewell* (1957), p. 152; Unwin, *op cit.*, ch. XIV; W. H. Chaloner, 'The Agricultural Activities of John Wilkinson, Ironmaster', *Agricultural History Review*, V (1957); Alan Harris, *The Rural Landscape of the East Riding of Yorkshire* (1961), p. 110; copy of accounts and diary (1806–33), of Richard Beech, in possession of G. B. Masefield, Department of Agriculture, University of Oxford; Norman Gash, *Mr. Secretary Peel* (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), pp. 15–18.

[2] Thompson, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

The ultimate industrial consequences of this draining of capital are (without a set of case studies) hard to assess. The selling-out of the great industrialists, or more commonly the severed industrial connexions of their descendants, may have caused formerly prominent firms to wither. The men who replaced them, of course, obtained ready-made industrial plant, but this turned them away from founding additional, fresh, and perhaps more modern firms. Instead, the purchase price they gave for the mills of their predecessors permitted the outgoing sons and grandsons to live boldly as landowners. Many founding fathers of industry would have been saddened to learn that family connexions with their firms were destined, as Dylan Thomas has it in the rather different context of *Under Milk Wood*, 'to die of drink and agriculture'.

The fate of the individual firm or any one industrial family is of less moment than the overall effect on the supply of industrial capital. Whether or not, outside cotton, there ever was a major long-run problem of providing fixed capital may be less important than the exact timing of investment. Technological breakthroughs or the timely extension of industrial plant required 'lumpy' investments. A few strategically placed entrepreneurs, determined instead to insert their descendants into landed society, might withhold investments of this kind, and retard by a fraction the development of the manufacturing base. No doubt the achievement of the growth industries of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was to keep up capital formation despite the persuasive attractions of the life bucolic. Nevertheless, the opportunity costs of land purchases like that of Hampton Court were high. Economic growth could surely have come faster without them.

LABOUR

Charles M. Elliott

4 The Ideology of Economic Growth: A Case Study

The influence of religious belief on economic behaviour is increasingly recognized as a sphere of interest of the development economist and sociologist as well as of the economic historian. However well founded the doubts that surround the nature of the relationship between belief and behaviour, *a priori* one would expect religious belief, as an important part of belief structure, to have a significant effect on economic behaviour. But because the connexion between belief and action is exceedingly complex, and because the substantiation of a clear causal link on any evidence would be difficult, the historian who works in this field finds himself faced with the unpalatable alternatives of saying nothing or sticking his neck out. The appearance of this essay is evidence of the latter choice.

Necessarily we begin with Weber. He advanced the thesis that Wesleyan Methodism, as a principal form of ascetic Protestantism and the eighteenth-century restatement of Puritanism, put forward a value system and set of attitudes which, giving rise to a 'specifically *bourgeois* economic ethic', were an integral feature in, and casual factor of, the development of capitalism in the Industrial Revolution. Although less well developed in his work, it seems that he thought that the English Calvinist churches of the eighteenth century, principally the Independents and the Baptists, also played a part in the formation of this value system.[1] Pregnant with exciting possibilities for all scholars concerned with the relationship between social and economic change, the basic thesis is thus seductively simple. Historians and economists have been seduced.[1]

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[1] M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930), pp. 116, 139–42, 150–3. For a detailed statement and critique of Weber's views, see T. Parsons, *Structure of Social Action* (New York, 1937), ch. XIV.

This first part of this article examines afresh the range of evidence on which a Weberian thesis could be built, and suggests that it is not adequate. We take the denominations concerned in order—first the Wesleyan Methodists, distinguishing Wesley's own teaching from the denominational dogma that was formulated after his death in 1791; then the Independents and the Baptists, who sharing a Calvinist inheritance, may be taken together; and last the Unitarian Church, made up of elements as diverse as General Baptists and English Presbyterians, but united in the accord of primacy to human reason.[2]

I

When the Weberian thesis is applied to Wesleyan Methodism it is suspect for three reasons. In the first place, there are huge areas of Wesleyan teaching that cannot be represented as favourable to wealth, capital accumulation, or business acumen. Second, a dilution of the Weberian thesis which might meet this objection is itself open to objections of logic. Third, the empirical evidence for the thesis seems weak.

First, as Weber readily admits, it is an oversimplification to suggest that Wesleyan teaching was consistently favourable to either capitalist enterprise *per se* or to many of the preconditions of capitalism. This is not to impugn the argument that Wesley preached the necessary virtues of industry and thrift.[1] Typical of the man himself was his insistence on hard work. 'In what manner do you transact your worldly business? I trust with diligence, whatever your hand findeth to do, doing it with your might.'[2] 'Use all possible diligence in your calling . . . Every business will afford some employment sufficient for every day and every hour.'[3] Spare time was a concept for which Wesley had little sympathy.[4]

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[1] W. J. Warner, *Wesleyan Methodism in the Industrial Revolution* (1930), chs. V, VI. N. J. Smelser, *Social Change in the Industrial Revolution* (1959), pp. 21–23, 210. (It is not altogether clear how far Smelser would go with Weber, but from his extensive quotations of dogma and his remarks on Sunday schools (p. 75), I assume he is broadly in agreement with Weber.) T. S. Ashton, *Industrial Revolution 1760–1830* (1948), p. 18. R. F. Wearmouth, *Methodism and the Common People of the Eighteenth Century* (1937), pp. 217–63. E. D. Bebb, *Nonconformity and Social and Economic Life, 1660–1800* (1935), p. 168. W. A. Lewis, *The Theory of Economic Growth* (1955), pp. 101–5. P. Alpert, *Economic Development; Objectives and Methods* (1963), p. 15. R. T. Gill, *Economic Development: Past and Present* (New Jersey, 1963), pp. 41–42. S. D. Clark, 'Religion and Economic Backward Areas', *American Economic Review* XLI (1951), pp. 258–65. K. F. Helleiner, 'Moral Conditions of Economic Growth,' *Journal of Economic History* XI (1951), pp. 97–116. K. Boulding, 'Religious Foundations of Economic Progress', *Harvard Business Review* XXX (1952), pp. 33–40.

[2] The author is much indebted to the editors, Dr. John Walsh and Dr. E. de Waal, for helpful comments and criticisms.

The end of work was gain, money. There was nothing morally questionable about money.[5] Its gain was a legitimate and desirable end. On the use of money, Wesley dictated Three Plain Rules . . . 'The first of these is . . . "Gain all you can" ',[6] 'Gain all you can by honest industry.'[7] Having made money by hard, honest work, it was not to be spent on 'luxuries or unprofitable trifles', but carefully saved. 'The Second Rule of Christian prudence is "Save all you can".'[8] 'You may save all you can by carefully avoiding every needless expense.'[9] Wesley was adamant on this latter point: one object of his rules on dress was to restrict expenditure on fashionable clothing.[10] 'After you have gained . . . all you can, and saved all you can wanting for nothing; spend not one pound, one shilling or one penny to gratify either the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes or the pride of Life . . .'[11]

With the diligent pursuit of gain and accumulation, Wesley recommended three further habits; each is favourable to economic advance. First, much of Wesley's economic teaching fosters the virtue of *pleonexia*, the desire to make more. This virtue usually implies a degree of self-improvement and social mobility which the mere pursuit of gain lacks. None the less Wesley thought the virtue 'under proper restrictions, innocent; nay commendable.'[1]

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[1] For the inadequacy of these virtues for the development of capitalist organization, see Lewis, *op. cit.*, pp. 232–3.

[2] *Works*, VII (3rd ed., London, 1829), Sermon LXXXIX, p. 31.

[3] *Ibid.*, VI Sermon L, p. 130.

[4] This was not a uniquely Methodist doctrine. Similar teaching can be found in Anglican (Evangelical), Calvinist, and Presbyterian material.

[5] *Works*, VI, Sermon L, *sup. cit.*, p. 126.

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 131.

[9] *Works*, VII, Sermon LXVII, p. 9.

[10] L. F. Church, *The Early Methodist People* (1949), pp. 196–9.

[11] *Works*, IX, Sermon CXXII, p. 361; cf. *Works* VI, Sermon L, *sup. cit.*, pp. 131–3, and VII, pp. 6, 8, where he attacks 'elegant epicurism'. At the individual level this rule may have led to capital accumulation. At a national level it would restrict demand for consumer goods, the growth sectors of the late eighteenth-century economy. However, it would be difficult to show that the quantitative effect involved was significant.

Secondly, Wesley urged his followers to apply their intelligence to their business. By implication, therefore, it is arguable that he encouraged the adoption and adaptation of improvements in technique. 'Gain all you can by common sense, by using in your business all the understanding which God has given you. It is amazing to observe how few do this: how men run on in the same dull track as their forefathers.'[2]

Lastly Wesley had no objection to the application of accumulated capital to productive uses. Where a man's necessary expenditure on the subsistence of himself and his family demanded an increased income, Wesley thought it obligatory to invest capital in the most productive medium.[3]

Wesleyan economic teaching thus included all the Weberian characteristics of industry, the desire for gain and socio-economic advance, intelligent modification of productive processes and the application of capital to business needs. Wesley's own dictum seems to support the Weberian conclusion: 'Religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches.'[4]

But to represent this, *tout court*, as Wesleyan economic teaching is a grotesque misrepresentation. Wesley's ideal economic man was a small shopkeeper or master craftsman. In the urban areas it was to this class that early Methodism appealed and it was with the economic problems of this class that Wesley was most familiar.[5] In this context Wesleyan economic ethics make sense. They are inapplicable to a larger scale of operations. For to try to make the business grow to a larger-scale enterprise Wesley condemned as covetousness. 'The labouring after a larger measure of wordly substance, a larger increase of gold and silver—the laying up any more than these ends (the provision of the family's bare needs) demand is . . . expressly and absolutely forbidden . . . whoever he is that, owing no man anything and having food and raiment for himself and his household together with a sufficiency to carry on his wordly business so far as answers these reasonable purposes seeks a still larger portion of the earth; he lives in an open, habitual denial of the Lord that bought him.'[1] To *seek* riches was to commit the sin of covetousness.[2] To have riches thrust upon one was pardonable but dangerous.[3] Wesley's definition of riches is itself revealing. 'Whosoever has food to eat and raiment to put on with something over is rich.'[4] Yet anyone who followed Wesley's advice above could reasonably expect to become rich. The paradox is solved in three stages.

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[1] *Works*, VII, Sermon LXXXVII, p. 5.

[2] *Works*, VI, Sermon L, p. 130.

[3] *Works*, V, Sermon CXIX, p. 367.

[4] *Arminian Magazine* (1757), p. 156. Quoted from Southey's *Life of Wesley* by Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, p. 175.

[5] Notice the unconvincing treatment of the problems of the very wealthy in *Works* IX, Sermon CXXVI, and especially pp. 355–7.

First, Wesley was concerned with the motive for becoming rich. If it was for personal luxury and security, then it was wrong. If it was to enable the recipient to give more, then it was permissible. Only under these conditions was *pleonexia* a virtue. Secondly, if the end was thus qualified, so were the means. Any attempt to increase business at another's expense was wrong. With one stroke most forms of competition are thus declared immoral. 'We cannot, consistent with brotherly love, sell our goods below the market price: we cannot study to ruin our neighbour's trade, in order to advance our own: much less can we entice away, or receive, any of his servants or workmen whom he has need of. None can gain by swallowing up his neighbour's substance without gaining the damnation of hell.'[5] Thirdly, the paradox is completely resolved by the great economic rule: 'Give all you can.' The only condition which makes the first two principles permissible is this emphasis on giving away surplus wealth after the bare necessities of life have been provided. 'Having gained in a right sense all you can, and saved all you can, in spite of nature, and custom and worldly prudence, give all you can.'[6] 'I remind all of you that are of this number that have the convenience of Life and something over that ye walk upon slippery ground.'[7] An increase in wealth must be matched by an increase in giving. More consistently than any other contemporary divine, Wesley developed the medieval theme of the stewardship of wealth.[1] An economic ethic created on such a base must censure all forms of acquisitiveness and economic aggressiveness.

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[1] *Works*, VII, Sermon CXIX, pp. 367–8. This may seem to conflict with Wesley's instruction to 'gain all you can'. But the contradiction is more apparent than real. He prohibited increased investment. The entrepreneur was to maximize returns on his present capital stock by hard and efficient work, but not to increase the scale of his enterprise unless the basic needs of his family warranted it.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 468–9. Cf. *Works* V, Sermon XXVII, pp. 361, 366. The element of inconsistency in condemning the search for wealth but approving *pleonexia* under proper safeguards does not appear to have occurred to Wesley.

[3] *Works*, VII, Sermon LXXXVII, p. 9.

[4] *Works*, IX., Sermon CXXVI, p. 356; cf. *Works*, VII, Sermon LXXXVII, p. 3; and Sermon CVIII, p. 215.

[5] *Works*, VI, Sermon L, p. 128.

[6] *Works*, VII, Sermon LXXXVII, p. 9.

[7] *Works*, VII, Sermon CXII, p. 250. Cf. Sermon LXXXVII, p. 10.

For the spirit of capitalism, commercial or industrial, is the spirit of unqualified *pleonexia*, the spirit of getting more, of producing more. Wesley's ethic is one of giving: it is there that the emphasis is placed. The very fury of his attacks on the wealthy in the Connexion in the 1780s, closely paralleled by some Evangelical Anglicans, is itself symptomatic of the extent to which Wesley himself was opposed to the 'spirit of capitalism' and all that it stood for.

So much for Wesley's own teaching: after his death in 1791 in only one important respect was Connexional economic teaching changed. As we have seen, Wesley regarded productive investment as justifiable as long as the process was continued only up to that point at which the return was adequate for the bare needs of the entrepreneur.[2] Thereafter, the capital stock must remain constant and surplus income must be given away. By 1840 there is evidence that this important principle had been surrendered. In an article in the *Methodist Magazine* it is recognized that wealth, i.e. capital, is necessary for the prosecution and extension of mercantile and industrial enterprises.[3] These are regarded as worthy causes, the source of national and individual prosperity.

But in other respects Connexional teaching continued its tone of hostility to the capitalist spirit. The Pastoral Address of the Conference of 1827—a significant year in view of the crash of 1826—urged upon Methodists 'the duty of guarding against the encroachment of a worldly spirit: the love of money is the root of all evil, and an eager desire for wealth is inconsistent with vital Christianity'.[4] So far from encouraging 'an eager desire for wealth', the *Methodist Magazine* claimed that Wesleyan Methodism was its antidote. 'It is the inevitable tendency of the manufacturing and commercial system to cherish a covetous and wordly spirit. This spirit, so incidental to the industrious and frugal habits which accompany the progress of religion in the middle classes, Methodism has had to contend with from the beginning. . . . The system possesses within itself a strong counteracting power to moderate the spirit in question. Besides being based on the voluntary supplies of its members, it cultivates and calls forth a spirit of liberality . . .'[1] Indeed, Wesleyan ministers regarded times of economic boom with considerable disfavour. This comment on the boom in textiles in 1823–4 reveals an attitude to commercial and industrial development which is difficult to reconcile with a value system favourable to rapid economic advance. '. . . The most monstrous and unnatural prosperity prevailed. The masters got money with incredible quickness. Common workmen earned from four to five pounds per week, by working only six hours per day . . . It was no uncommon thing to give eight or nine hundred guineas for machines which would now not sell for more than a third of that sum . . . all trades were in the most extraordinary prosperity, in consequence of the outrageous exuberance of money. The commonality lived in the most abominable profusion . . . But by the good Providence of God, things have been wonderfully altered.'[2]

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[1] *Works*, VI, Sermon L, *sup. cit.*, pp. 133–4; IX, Sermon CXXXVI, *sup. cit.*, p.361; Sermon CXIX, pp. 308, 374–7.

[2] Wesley was aware of the possibility of increasing productive capacity in order to increase the capacity to give; but he was suspicious of an argument that sounded to him like special pleading.

[3] *Methodist Magazine* (1840), p. 373.

[4] *Conference Minutes* (1827). Cf. IX (1840), p. 118.

Not only was the whole ethos of the contemporary economic scene deplored, but also traditional impediments to economic activity remained intact. Following Wesley's teaching,[3] the use of credit for industrial and mercantile enterprises remained strictly forbidden as late as the 1840s, on the grounds that the risk of the bankruptcy of the borrower imperils not only the borrower but also the lender.[4] Speculation, which is implicitly defined in the widest terms to include not only speculation in commodity values but also any kind of economic activity of which the outcome could be affected by a foreseeable change in economic conditions, is rigorously condemned. The Wesleyans of 1836 were urged 'to run contrary to the spirit of the times by eschewing all schemes and speculations',[5] and the depression of 1842 was regarded as providential retribution of failure to heed this warning.[6] It is surely fanciful to argue that teaching which lays so much stress upon the immorality of risk-bearing of any kind is a catalyst, much less a cause, in the process of economic change.

Contemporaries do not seem to have regarded Wesleyan Methodist dogma as an important factor in the process of economic change.

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[1] *Methodist Magazine* (1830), p. 536.

[2] Quoted in G. H. Harwood, *The History of Methodism* (Nottingham, 1872), pp. 147–8. Cf. *Methodist Magazine* (1799), pp. 144–5.

[3] *Works*, V, Sermon XXVII, p. 366.

[4] *Conference Minutes*, IX, 1840, p. 117. This, of course, is the reverse of 'classical' usury teaching. See Helleiner, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

[5] *Conference Minutes*, IX (1836).

[6] *Conference Minutes*, IX (1842), p. 408.

Gravener Henson clearly thought that the Wesleyan emphasis on contentment was indicative of the nature of the whole dogma. 'The effect of this sect has been great upon the manners and opinions of the people, as they invariably inculcate the doctrine of a passive submission to events as happening according to the fore-knowledge of the Deity: that man in this world is in a state of preparation for another and that his only care and object ought to be submission and resignation to the will of heaven.'[1] But this resignation was also, allegedly, a characteristic of the wealthier Wesleyans. W. G. Scarth, a dyer from Leeds and for many years a most influential layman throughout the Connexion, in 1836 attributed his business success not to the worldly effects of the precepts of his religion but to 'the wisdom and manliness of acknowledging God in all our ways, in the shop as well as in the sanctuary'.[2]

A more sophisticated Weberian will not be convinced by this demonstration that it is impossible to represent Wesleyan dogma, taken as a whole, as encouraging the accumulation of capital or the pursuit of economic advantage. He will point out that in the *Protestant Ethic* Weber states explicitly that his concern is not so much with the dictates of church discipline as with the relationship between a system of religious ideas and the interests, and especially the religious interests, of church members. Weber, it could be said, was taking motivation and 'interests' as the foci of his theory. It is attitudes and 'interests', not ideas, that compel people, and it is therefore attitudes and interests that Weber analyses.[3]

In our view this distinction is overdrawn. The logical division between 'attitudes' and 'interests' on the one hand and 'ideas' on the other is, of course, acceptable *as a logical distinction*, but it is dangerous to erect a dynamic theory of behaviour and motivation on such a nice distinction. We put forward three objections. In the first place, ideas are the expression of interests, and interests may be derived from ideas. The two mutually interact in a complex relation. To drive a logical wedge between them is to risk distorting this relation. Secondly, Weber seems to draw too fine a distinction between the ecclesiastical leaders on the one side and the masses of the church membership on the other.[4]

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[1] G. Henson, *The Civil, Political and Mechanical History of the Framework Knitters in Europe and America*, I (Nottingham, 1831), p. 253.

[2] B. Gregory, *Sidelights on the Conflicts of Methodism during the 2nd Quarter of the 19th Century, 1827–52* (1898), p. 262.

[3] Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 97. Cf. Parsons, *op. cit.*, pp. 520–1.

[4] *Ibid.*

We have argued elsewhere that this is a very naïve view of church life.[1] Those responsible for framing church discipline were under continual pressure from the rank and file. As a result church discipline often corresponded closely to the interests and aspirations of at least one group of members. This Weberian distinction is thus too neat to fit the facts. Thirdly, by insisting on the prime importance of the *direct* religious motivation of the individual[2] and by discounting dogmatic statements, not only does Weber repeat the mistake of taking apart the inseparable, but he also renders his theory less historically interesting because less easily testable. We have very little evidence of direct religious motivation. We certainly cannot test whether such statements as we have about it are true or false. It is perhaps significant that Weber quotes extensively from dogma in the *Protestant Ethic*: this is after all the evidence we do have.

To return to the mainstream of the argument, the assertion that Wesleyan dogma as a whole was antipathetic to the ownership of wealth does not entail the denial that Wesleyan Methodists sometimes became wealthy or that their religious affiliation was an important factor contributing to their prosperity. Especially in the eighteenth century, the moral revolution worked by conversion was crucially important. The infusion of a new morale, a new purpose, a new drive into the lives of the demoralized is a psychological fact which historians overlook at their peril.[3] But, having experienced conversion, an individual could remain nominally a Methodist, without obeying those parts of the discipline which would jeopardize his economic advancement.[4] The very frequency of the repetition of those parts is itself symptomatic of the frequency with which they were ignored. Although Daniel Isaac, for instance, had the reputation of being the scourge of the business interests,[5] there is some evidence that preachers connived at business immorality because to reprove it would have offended the wealthy members of the Connexion whose financial support was vital. Before his death Wesley had been aware of the problem: after 1790 it became more acute.[6] To cast out the rich would then have been to court financial disaster. Thus whereas the Methodists expelled those who refused to abide by the 'No Politics' rule, their financial support ensured the continued toleration of the rich within the Connexion, despite the fact that their conduct was often fundamentally in conflict with what Wesley taught and the preachers preached. However, it is open to a Weberian to argue that the traditional view still stands. Consciously or unconsciously, he might argue, Methodist entrepreneurs rejected some (anti-capitalistic) parts of the Wesleyan ethic and acted on other parts which favoured capital accumulation. But this argument will not do. Rejection and adoption imply selection: and selection implies a criterion by which a choice is made. That criterion was not Wesleyan Methodist dogma.

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[1] See my unpublished D.Phil. thesis: 'The Economic and Social History of the Principal Protestant Denominations in Leeds, 1760–1844' (Oxford, 1962), pp. 439–527.

[2] Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 97, and Parsons, *op. cit.*, p. 521 (Parsons's italics).

[3] Warner treats this theme particularly well. See *op. cit.*, ch. III and IV.

[4] Cf. Weber, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

[5] Gregory, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

[6] J. Barker, *History and Confessions of a Man* (Wortley, 1846), pp. 404–7.

According to Weber, Western capitalism ceased to need the impetus of ascetic Protestantism in the early years of the twentieth century.[1] We are now suggesting that economic rationality was sufficiently firmly established in England by the second half of the eighteenth century for it alone to be the principle by which certain groups adopted or rejected the teaching of contemporary religious bodies. In that case, it seems otiose to herald Methodism or Nonconformity as restatements of ascetic Protestantism, giving to the value system of the community the 'drives' necessary for economic change.

If the traditional thesis is unsatisfactory on these grounds, it is insupportable empirically. If it were true that Wesleyan Methodism inspired ideals or values which were favourable to the emergence of substantial capitalists, we would expect to find a disproportionate number of Wesleyan capitalists in the period 1770–1840.[2] While empirical research on this topic is jeopardized by the inadequacy of directories and of denominational records, as well as the frequency of interdenominational migration, it is possible to produce supplementary evidence to suggest that Wesleyan Methodists were not, in fact, more likely to become entrepreneurs than were other groups. Here we advance four pieces of evidence.

In the first place, Professor Everett Hagen has analysed the religious affiliations of the enterpreneurs mentioned in Ashton's *Industrial Revolution.* Although one may legitimately have grave doubts about this selection, we will accept that his list is in some sense representative and that he has at least identified the Methodists.[1] Of the seventy-two 'British Innovators' whose religious affiliation Hagen can specify, only two are Methodists, namely Samuel Oldknow and Samuel Walker.[2]

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[1] Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 181–2, quoted in N. J. Smelser, *Sociology of Economic Life* (New Jersey, 1963), p. 109.

[2] This would still be so even though it is doubtless true that the effect of denominational teaching was not limited to that denomination.

The remaining three empirical tests are more local and perhaps more reliable. First, of twenty early textile mills of Nottinghamshire, of which it is possible to discover the denominational allegiance of the owners, only one was owned by a Methodist.[3] Yet the strength of Methodism in this area was well known. Secondly and thirdly, a more detailed investigation of Leeds and Nottingham reveals the same lack of correlation between Wesleyan Methodism and the accumulation of wealth. The table below shows an occupational analysis of the trustees of Methodist chapels in these areas, 1766–1850, with a slight bunching in the 1820s and 1830s. The trustees tended to be the socio-economic cream of the societies, since they were sureties for the debt on the chapels and had considerable influence in the Connexion at large. It is therefore unlikely that a significant number of entrepreneurs will have escaped detection, although it is true that not all the trust deeds have been traced. Nevertheless, comparing the *trustees* in the table with the *whole membership* of the Connexion in the two towns in 1830, it appears that only 0(.62) per cent of Wesleyan Methodists in Nottingham and Leeds were 'capitalists' as defined in the table; and that, taking the trustees alone, there was nearly twice the number of 'non-capitalists' as 'capitalists'.[4]

If this empirical evidence goes some way towards confirming our view that the Weberian view will not stand close critical investigation, it must also be admitted that the quality of this evidence itself is not above reproach. There is first the problem of a statistical control. Attempts to provide such a control have not proved very convincing, even on a local basis. Secondly, it is true that there is evidence to show

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[1] Unfortunately he does not distinguish between Wesleyans, Primitives, New Connexion, and Association. But this bias is against our present argument and so can be accepted.

[2] E. E. Hagen, *On the Theory of Social Change* (1964), pp. 305–8.

[3] See S. Chapman's article in *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVIII (1965): 'The Transition to the Factory System in the Midlands Cotton Industry'. Mr. Chapman very kindly supplied me with information on the ownership of mills in Nottinghamshire. I am most grateful to him.

[4] This term 'capitalist' is not used in the normal sense of owners of capital. If it were, retailers and traders would be included. It is rather used to designate either the ownership of very substantial wealth (e.g. gentleman living off invested capital) or direct participation in the leading sectors of industry and commerce in each town on a substantial scale. The distinction is fluffy, but not inoperable.

Table 1 Occupational analysis of Methodist chapel trustees in Leeds and Nottingham 1772–1856

Capitalists:		Non-capitalists:	
Merchants	15	Retailers	31
Manufacturers	25	Farmers and Yeomen	4
Banker	1	Professional and semi-professional	13
Gentlemen	7	Traders	38
	48		86

Total analysed = 149
Remain unidentified = 15

that wealthy Methodists became Anglicans, Independents or Baptists.[1] These are difficulties the economic historian who works in this field must live with. They deny him the satisfaction of complete proof, but should not inhibit him from making reasonable suggestions. In the light of the foregoing discussion, it seems to be a reasonable suggestion that the balance of the available evidence lies against the application of the Weberian thesis to Wesleyan Methodism.

2

Is the same true of nonconformity? Here the Calvinist churches must be differentiated from the Presbyterian-Unitarian. We examine the former in this section, and the latter in the next.

For the traditional view to stand it must be clear that the Calvinist—i.e. Baptist and Independent—churches preached an ethic favourable to aggressive economic behaviour and that this affected the socio-economic activity of Calvinists. We shall first show that Calvinist dogma is not susceptible to this interpretation, and we shall then re-examine the empirical evidence to see if it can be proved that the Calvinist churches provided a disproportionate number of entrepreneurs in this period.

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[1] See below, p. 89.

It is certainly true that the Calvinists believed in the temporal effects of religion. In an article 'On the Tendency of True Religion to better the Temporal Condition of Cottagers' a correspondent of the *Evangelical Magazine*, one of the main Calvinist journals, claimed that 'Christianity unveils the glories of heaven, the pure and perfect felicities of an eternal world, but it exerts a beneficial influence in improving our condition even in this life'. Religion purifies the moral life and therefore banishes 'lewdness and intemperance', which 'brings tens of thousands into poverty, debt, disgrace and misery who might have been useful members of society'. Having worked a moral reformation, 'religion also obviously leads to habits of industry, order and economy'.[1] Richard Winter Hamilton, one of the great champions of the Independent churches in the 1830s and 1840s, revealed a close but not uncritical sympathy with the manufacturing and commercial interests in his *Institutions of Popular Education*. He was stating a contemporary cliché when he remarked that 'a religious district is a thriving district'.[2] He believed that religion is 'the truest pledge and kindest source of temporal prosperity. It is . . . accompanied with a "blessing" on industrious habits and justly won pelf, a "blessing that maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow therewith".'[3] The Baptist William Pendred told the merchants of Hull: 'Push forward, if possible, your various manufactures, keep open all the channels of your commerce . . . secure by marriages a rising generation, and by a laudable industry make the very best provision you can for children and grandchildren.'[4] Industriousness is as warmly commended as in Wesleyan teaching.[5]

Yet to represent this as typical of the whole of Calvinist teaching would be misleading. For it is open to us to argue that Calvinist dogma was no more favourable to aggressive business behaviour than was Methodist. From the clearly defined corpus of Calvinist teaching, objections are raised to such behaviour, often in identical phraseology to Wesleyan dogma. Thus Baptists were warned against the sin of covetousness;[1] against seeking to increase wealth;[2] against the incompatibility of riches and spiritual progress;[3] and against the use of credit.[4] Independents were advised of the dangers of 'making haste to be rich',[5] and were recommended to exert themselves in 'seeking fresh channels for your benevolence to flow in'.[6] The close parallel with Methodist teaching is clear. Similarly the Calvinist denominational periodicals abound with censures of the wealthy.[7] Equally, the rules of trade, propounded in the periodicals, affect the same hostility to 'capitalistic' entrepreneurial behaviour. One example must suffice. 'It is common, even for professors, to say, "Must we not purchase as cheap as we can? Must we not buy to the best advantage?" I answer: "No".'[8]

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[1] *Evangelical Magazine* (1825), p. 321.

[2] W. H. Stowell, *Memoir of the Life of Richard Winter Hamilton* (1858), p. 158.

[3] Stowell, *op. cit.*, p. 123. But Hamilton did not believe that temporal success is a reward for spiritual worth.

[4] W. Pendred, *The duty of Christians to seek the Peace and Welfare of the Community. A Sermon Preached at Kingston-upon-Hull, on the late Public Fast . . .* (Halifax, 1797), pp. 10–11.

[5] See Caleb Evans, *Redeeming the Time* (1774); John Geere, *Serious Considerations on Plays, Games, and other Fashionable Diversions* (1763); Joseph Hughes, *Christian Zeal* (1802).

Calvinists were not, then, taught any value system which placed a high value on business success. 'I endeavour to follow my business', the *Evangelical Magazine* quoted from Fothergill, 'because it is my duty rather than my interest: the latter is inseparable from a just discharge of duty: but I have ever looked at the profits in the last place.' Doing his business 'with all the diligence' he could, he tried 'to repress every rising idea of its consequences knowing that there was an hand which could easily overthrow every pursuit of this kind'.[9] Wealth itself was highly suspect. 'Were it lawful and becoming in a man to chuse his circumstances in life, a mediocrity would be perhaps the most useful . . . Opulence may tempt us to dissipation . . . poverty to every falsehood.'[10]

Two streams of teaching, then, ran through Calvinist dogma. One could be favourable to 'capitalism': one was hostile to it. If the Weberians argue that Calvinist entrepreneurs selected the former and rejected the latter, then they are open to the objection of the criterion of choice already urged against them with reference to the Wesleyan Methodists. If there is choice there must be some criterion by which choice is made. And if there is a criterion, then it is that which is the relevant value system and not denominational dogmatics.

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[1] *Baptist Magazine* (1837), pp. 479–82.

[2] *Ibid.* (1829), pp. 460–2.

[3] *Ibid.* (1817), p. 14.

[4] *Ibid.* (1837), pp. 79–82: and W. Crabtree, *The Prosperity of a Gospel Church considered* . . . (Bradford, 1789), pp. 15–16.

[5] *Baptist Magazine* (1822), pp. 96–97.

[6] *Evangelical Magazine* (1822), pp. 49–53.

[7] Some leading examples are: *Congregational Magazine* (1832), pp. 201–8; (1835), p. 382; (1836), p. 633; (1840), p. 288; (1844), p. 124.

[8] *Evangelical Magazine* (1805), p. 114. Cf. *ibid.* (1804), p. 106, and T. H. Hudson, *Christian Socialism explained and enforced* . . . (1839), p. 158.

[9] *Evangelical Magazine* (1806), p. 220. The parallel with the Wesleyan W. G. Scarth, speaking thirty years later, is obvious. See above, p. 82.

[10] W. Giles, *The Guide to Domestic Happiness* (London, 1776), p. 30. Quoted in O. Robinson, *The Particular Baptists in England, 1760–1820* (Oxford D. Phil. thesis, 1963).

Empirically, the correlation between faith and successful economic performance seems to be higher for the Calvinists than for the Wesleyans, although the quality of the evidence is not so good. Hagen found that 40 per cent of the English and Scottish innovators in his sample were Calvinists, against 7 per cent of the population.[1] In the analysis of Nottinghamshire mills, three of the twenty owners whose religious affiliation is known were Calvinists. In Leeds the Calvinist churches were a haven for wealthy ex-Methodists whose church principles or social sensitivity prevented them from conforming to the Established Church. At the principal Independent church in the city 10 per cent of members were 'capitalists' 1806–11, and 12 per cent 1837–42. In Nottingham, the General Baptists had 14 per cent in 1819 and 22 per cent in 1829.[2] The Particular Baptists had between 4 per cent and 6 per cent, 1818–36. Contemporary comment suggests that in most urban areas there was a long-standing nucleus of wealthy merchants attached to each denomination.[3]

However, it is easy to exaggerate the extent to which the new commercial and industrial classes were Calvinist: and in any case, were this shown to be generally true, no causal link would necessarily have been established. For three reasons we submit that the evidence does not permit overexuberance about the 'intimate connexion'[4] between Calvinism and new capitalistic activity. In the first place, the Calvinist churches inherited from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries a nucleus of merchants. This nucleus must be subtracted from the total capitalist strength to isolate the new entrepreneurical members. Difficult to do statistically, this exercise may well reduce the capitalistic component of the Calvinist churches in Leeds and Nottingham by as much as a quarter in the late eighteenth century, though by less in the early nineteenth.

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[1] Hagen, *op. cit.*, pp. 297, 309. I am grateful to Professor Hagen for pointing out an error in his arithmetic, the correction of which increases the proportion from 41 per cent to 43 per cent.

[2] It is difficult to believe that this was typical. The General Baptists were predominantly working class. See A. C. Underwood, *A History of the English Baptists* (1847), pp. 150–5.

[3] See *Congregational Magazine* (1836), p. 25; *Evangelical Magazine* (1825), p. 47; *Congregational Register* (1869), p. 32.

[4] Ashton, *loc. cit.*, quoted with qualified approval in Smelser, *Social Change*, *sup. cit.*, p. 68.

Secondly, there are some striking examples of Calvinism being mainly a working-class creed. Welsh Calvinism, for instance, failed to throw up any significant number of entrepreneurs in the Welsh iron industry. The ironworks of north Monmouthshire were manned very largely by immigrant Calvinists from rural Wales. Yet 'throughout the industrial belt of North Monmouthshire only four Welsh names appear in the early history of these ironworks . . . All four . . . soon disappeared from the scene. Consequently the early Welsh Nonconformists . . . occupied the more lowly positions in the iron industry. They were working for masters who were, at least nominally, Anglican in religion.'[1]

Thirdly, it is possible that some contemporary evidence overdraws the alignment of Calvinism with big business. For instance, the leaders of the Ten Hour Movement were Tory-Anglicans: by emphasizing the connexion between Dissent and the Millocracy they not only closed their own ranks but also gave to a general disturbance a particular socio-political character.[2]

For these reasons, the association of Calvinism with the new capitalism must not be exaggerated. But if it is true that a disproportionate number of Calvinists were entrepreneurs, the Weberian case is still not established. For, as we shall see below, it is not sound for a Weberian to argue that the disproportion was the result of religious or theological factors.

3

We turn now to the Unitarians. This Church, drawing its adherents from an oddly assorted amalgam of dissident Anglicans, unorthodox Presbyterians and, later in the eighteenth century, General Baptists, maintained the traditionally patrician appeal and atmosphere of English Presbyterianism. As the radical Transcendentalist (Unitarian) J. R. Beard wrote in 1846: 'It is very evident that the aristocratic formalism of the Presbyterian Section of this body (i.e. the Unitarian Church) is not united to the spirit of the masses of our population.'[3] Throughout the eighteenth century the Unitarian Church was patronized by an exclusive, well-to-do, commercial oligarchy.[1] In terms of the argument above, there had always been a disprotionately high mercantile nucleus in the Unitarian Church. Before we assess the extent to which this nucleus grew in the period of the Industrial Revolution, we must analyse denominational dogma to isolate any 'capitalistic' tenor.

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[1] E. T. Davies, *Religion in the Industrial Revolution in South Wales* (1965).

[2] Cf. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), pp. 72–73.

[3] J. R. Beard (ed.), *Unitarianism Exhibited in its Actual Condition* (1846).

Can it be shown that the Unitarian teaching imparted a new value system which encouraged the pursuit of economic advantage? We must admit that the objection we have urged against this line of reasoning with respect to the Wesleyans and Calvinists is not as readily applicable in this case. For in contrast to the latter denominations, there is not such a strongly emphasized anti- or extra-mundanism in the teaching of the Unitarians, or 'Rational Dissenters', as they preferred to call themselves. There is also much direct encouragement of commercial and industrial activity.

We start with the former. While it is not difficult to find condemnations of a high valuation of the things of this world, especially in eighteenth-century Presbyterian teaching, this strain of thought seems to lack the vehemence of Wesley's censures and the Biblical passion of the Calvinist denunciation. Thus Rev. Samuel Eaton, a relation of a former Mayor of Nottingham wrote: 'The intention of Christianity and of all true religions is not to encourage softness and ease by promising security and external prosperity as the reward of our Prayers and Devotion, but to raise our hearts above this world and its enjoyment and to make us content with our conditions.'[2] Rather than the harsh Wesleyan philippics against wealth, Walker merely reminded his congregation that 'external prosperity is not essential to the happiness of man'.[3] The Wesleyan theme of the stewardship of wealth is not absent from Presbyterian-Unitarian teaching.

The political philosophy of that most famous Unitarian, Joseph Priestley, later expanded and improved by the Manchester School, vied with his theology in declaring that an increase in wealth at both national and personal levels was by no means contrary to the ordinances of God. Capital and enterprise, as means to this end, were good in

[1] Although broadly true, this should not be applied to every Unitarian congregation. See Lilian Beard, 'Unitarianism in the Potteries from 1812', *Unitarian Historical Society Transactions*, VI (1923).

[2] Eaton, MS. sermon of 1747. Cf. Grundy's MS. sermon on York Academy, p. 18.

[3] C. Walker, *Sermon on Providence* (1784), p. 37. This sermon, dedicated to Pitt, is in reality a bitter political attack on the war.

themselves, and should be encouraged by the State, just as should industry and frugality in the poor.[1] In contrast to Wesley and many Calvinistic writers, Priestley condemns the petty trader, but extols 'the merchant whose dealings are various and extensive'.[2] The most uncompromising expression of this implicit championship of the mercantile ideal came from William Wood, Priestley's successor at Leeds. Commerce was of God, and therefore capitalism, as means to that end, 'must be considered . . . a divine appointment'.[3] Capitalism was further seen as a means of social amelioration. For all commercial and technical progress 'are owing to that difference of outward situation which has at all times been a subject of complaint to the discontented and foolish'.[4]

Added to this favourable attitude to capitalism, the Rational Dissenters set at a premium the use of reason.[5] Although we have seen that John Wesley urged his followers to apply their intelligence to their work, only in Rational Dissent is this a consistent theme. The Unitarian Church was founded on reason. Its theology was the theology of reason. The Rational Dissenter was conditioned to question, to re-examine, to withhold acceptance, to distrust orthodoxy. 'Put no shackles on a free born mind! However light they are shackles still.' So Walker told the wealthy Rational Dissenters of Nottingham, and there is little in the context to suggest that he thought that free inquiry was to be limited to religious truth. Tayler thought that such inquiry was a natural right.[6] Following Priestley, Grundy declared: 'For my own part I can form no conception of religion but as connected with reason.'[7] He conceived of a progression from reason to truth and knowledge, and thence to 'virtue and happiness'.[8] The Rational Dissenter, as the very name implies, was continually challenged, in every sector of life, to apply his intelligence to the problems around him. It is thus no surprise that Unitarians were well represented in the Lunar Society in Birmingham.[1] Here, then, we have a denominational dogma which is highly, if not wholly, favourable to capitalist development.[2] The objection of selection will not lie: there is too little anti-mundanism.

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[1] J. D. Rutt (ed.), *Complete Works*, XXIV (1821), pp. 258, 317–18.

[2] *Ibid.*, XXV, p. 24; cf. XXIV, p. 342.

[3] W. Wood, *Sermon at Birmingham* (Leeds, 1805), pp.`5–6. Cf. G. Walker, *A Sermon preached at Nottingham . . .* (1778), p. 43.

[4] Wood, *op. cit.*, p. 16. This foreshadowing of the doctrine of the necessary harmony of classes was a common Presbyterian Unitarian theme from the middle of the eighteenth century. It can be found in Eaton, Priestley, Grundy, and some periodical literature.

[5] Cf. Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 75–79; see, too, p. 147, where Weber suggests that the Baptists, by 'devaluing' the sacraments, encouraged the use of reason; and Hagen, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

[6] Walker, (1778), *sup. cit.*, J. Tayler, *Dominion over the Faith of Christians discountenanced in a Sermon . . .* (1796), p. 17.

[7] *High Pavement Chapel, Nottingham, MSS.*, MS. Sermon on York Academy.

[8] *Ibid.*, Sermon No. 8.

The Weberian argument seems strengthened, then, when we reveal the connexion between Unitarian allegiance and capitalist activity. 'The absence of the poor from Unitarian chapels is neither a matter of surprise or of regret.'[3] (*sic*). There is evidence to substantiate the charge. An analysis of the trust deeds of Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, one of the most famous Unitarian chapels in the kingdom, shows that in the middle of the eighteenth century this Presbyterian chapel[4] was the resort of a wealthy, intermarried clique, engaged, for the most part, in the woollen industry. Later data show that the progress towards Unitarianism did nothing to dilute this commercial oligarchy. In 1845 47 per cent of the pew-holders who appear in the directory could be ranked as capitalists. In Nottingham the same is true. In the eighteenth century the Presbyterian-Unitarian chapel provided at least sixty-six of the mayors. Membership data for 1784, 1798, and 1822 show a high proportion of wealthy, politically active members. In Mansfield, Notts., two-thirds of the trustees in 1847 were textile capitalists.

Evidence of a different type is afforded by the analysis of Nottinghamshire mill-owners. Of these twelve of the thirty-one were Presbyterian-Unitarians. Hagen found that at least five of his ninety-one innovators were Unitarians.[5]

Given this disproportionate number of Unitarian entrepreneurs, a warmly capitalist tone in denominational dogma, and a theological emphasis on reason, have we here a Weberian case of theological change producing economic change? Although there is a good prima-facie case, there are some reasons for doubting whether, *on any evidence*, the answer could be unconditionally affirmative. In the first place, such an answer would surely imply that theology can exist independently of its social environment. This is no more possible than it is for philosophy or history. Secondly, an explanation of historical phenomena, to be convincing, must isolate and analyse the causes of these phenomena. Even if it were true that the historical sequence had been *first* the assumption of divine sanction of large-scale entrepreneurship, and *second* the emergence of a disproportionate number of Unitarian industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, it is not clear that we would have been justified in concluding that one caused the other. The two phenomena existed side by side. It is indeed arguable that the wealthy oligarchy *caused* the dogma of the denomination to favour its own prejudice. There is good evidence to this effect.[1]

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[1] For the connexion between the Lunar Society and industry, see S. Lilley, 'La Scienza agli inizi rivoluzione industriale', *Studi Storici*, II (1961), p. 475.

[2] It is clearly impossible to call Unitarianism a form of ascetic Protestantism.

[3] *Congregational Magazine* (1836), p. 25.

[4] It became Unitarian under Priestley.

[5] Hagen, *loc. cit.*

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With the possible exception of the Unitarians, then, the evidence suggests that the Weberian account of the relation between theological and economic change is not acceptable. Are we then committed, with Tawney and Hagen, to a form of psychological determinism? If this explains denominational allegiance, it explains little about the influence of theological change on the economy—which is surely the central theme of the Weberian analysis. In an attempt to meet the Weberians, then, the rest of this paper indicates some of those areas of influence. None is original; they are emphasized here because it is important to see the economic impact of the following socio-theological changes.

First, the Evangelical Revival had an impact on the manners and mores of all strata of society. Quantitatively as well as qualitatively this impact was greatest on the working classes, and it therefore seems reasonable to suggest—and this may itself come near to Weber's own ideas—that the Evangelical Revival improved the quality of the labour force. Henson speaks, retrospectively, of the 'drunkenness and (its) natural consequences, indolence'[2] in the middle of the eighteenth century, and a few decades later Wedgwood was frequently complaining of his workmen's fractious and independent spirit. 'Wakes's (*sic*) must be observed tho' the world was to end with them.'[3] An observer in 1786 wrote that 'idle and disorderly persons of both sexes and of all descriptions are everywhere to be met with'.[4] We suggest that the Evangelical Revival, and later the Tractarian and Transcendentalist movements, were one group of factors slowly changing those idle and disorderly persons into a more disciplined, relatively tractable work force. More regular employment, the factory system, a better diet and adjustments to the family economy all worked in the same way: but it is not naïve to insist that the moral revolution, that ran almost *pari passu* with the industrial revolution, had economic consequences. The decline in drunkenness, in gross entertainments, in irregularity of work, in incivility to employers, in maltreatment of children and women at work all added up in the long run to a healthier, more efficient work force. As James Orange, Nonconformist minister, surveyor, critic of the New Poor Law and land reformer, observed in 1841: 'Piety and morality go hand in hand with an ameliorated condition of the lower classes.'[1] Lord Ashley's celebrated comparison of the working classes with savages met with much disagreement. 'There is ignorance: there is vice: there is drunkeness: there is irreligion . . . But to describe our working classes in a body as hordes without any distinction from the savage . . . is a manifest error. There is among them . . . much humble piety, much modest virtue.'[2]

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[1] See my thesis, *sup. cit.* pp. 413–38, 506–27.

[2] Henson, *op. cit.*, p. 238.

[3] Wedgwood to Bentley, Etruria, 5 July 1776. Quoted in B. Trueman, *Josiah Wedgwood. An 18th Century Entrepreneur* (M.A. Thesis, Nottingham, 1960), p. 407. See also pp. 406, 413.

[4] Quoted in M. J. Quinlan, *Victorian Prelude* (New York, 1941), p. 42.

It is easy to exaggerate the extent to which the quality of the labour force had increased by, say, 1840. More sophisticated sociological investigations in the second half of the century revealed plenty of shortcomings in the labour force. None the less, despite the difficulties of weighing the vast volume of conflicting evidence from the Factory Commissioners, it remains true that the dominant theme harmonizes with Place and Porter. *The Improvement of the Working People* and *The Progress of the Nation* both attest to a gradual but sustained improvement in the labour force. It was not empty eulogism that led Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth in the second half of the nineteenth century to speak of 'the higher moral qualities of a capacity for obedience, fidelity, discipline and organization' of the working classes.[3]

As Kay-Shuttleworth himself was aware, the widespread effect of the Evangelical Revival was not apparent only in the change of morals.[4] The principal means by which the Evangelicals sought to influence

[1] James Orange: *A Plea on Behalf of the Poor* (1841), pp. 41–42.

[2] Speech by Rev. William Sinclair: *Leeds Intelligencer*, 25 Mar. 1843. On this whole theme, see S. Pollard. 'Factory discipline in the Industrial Revolution', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVI, No. 2 (1963–4), pp. 367–70. Although his conclusions go further than his evidence, his is an interesting treatment of a neglected subject.

[3] Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, *Thoughts and Suggestions on Certain Social Problems* (1873), p. 21. Cf. p. vii.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. x.

contemporary society was education. There is not space to describe here the part played by the various denominations in the spread of education: we make two pertinent points. First, the fact that education was so readily espoused as a cause from prudential motives by the middle and upper classes does not, of course, mean that the beneficiaries did not gain the means to better themselves thereby. As early as 1802 a writer in the *Methodist Magazine* had to assure his readers that in the Sunday schools 'a love of order, peace, diligence, and humility is constantly enforced' to meet objections that the schools were 'elevating the poor from their humble station'.[1]

Although their church had been in the van of agitation for improved education, even the Unitarians found they had to temper enthusiasm for working-class education with respect for the social *status quo*: '. . . Pay special attention to instilling moral and religious truths into the minds of children, giving them views of their situation and sound practical rules for their conduct. Such matters are of much more consequence than making them good writers or accountants.'[2] The long-run results of education were thus often directly contrary to the intention of many of its early supporters. Further, although Raikes claimed that Sunday schools made 'idle, ungovernable, profligate and filthy' boys 'more orderly, tractable and attentive to business, and, of course, more serviceable',[3] this attention to business did not easily coexist for long with the contentment and social immobility that all denominational teaching instilled so faithfully. Thus even denominational education, with all its religious sanctions, was a catalyst in the process of increasing social mobility.

Secondly, the quality of this education must not be underestimated. Arithmetic was taught in some charity schools. The S.P.C.K. deliberately set out to produce professional and semi-professional people from working-class backgrounds. The British and Foreign Schools Society taught the three R's. Arithmetic was taught in Sunday schools, at special week-night classes.[4] The Committee of Council on Education found in 1844 that in the Midlands seven out of nine children had some knowledge of arithmetic on leaving day-school. Even though education was still quantitatively and qualitatively inadequate, the improvement since 1770 was dramatic, and by 1812 the *Eclectic Review*, at least, was convinced that the myth of the dangerous effect of education was exploded. 'Knowledge does not provide food for the hungry or clothing for the naked. Industry is quite as necessary after instruction, as it was before: and the only difference is that those who have been instructed are able to turn the fruits of their labour to the best account.'[1] There are here two points. The first is that the education thus provided increased the supply of clerical and managerial labour. Although it may be true that many managers derived more substantial benefit from the informal, extra-mural education of literary and philosophical societies, the increasing availability of education, although still inadequate, played an important role. The second is that such education had an impact on non-managerial labour also. By the 1830s at least one commentator thought that the increase in the productivity of labour was coming home to roost: 'Everyone who reflects on the present situation of the lower classes of the community is well aware that there has been a momentous alteration effected within the last fifty years. That a decided improvement has taken place and generally speaking they now enjoy a greater number of the comforts and luxuries of life—and what is of more importance, they have attained higher rank in the grade of rational beings.'[2]

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[1] *Methodist Magazine* (1802), p. 431.

[2] *High Pavement Chapel, Nottingham, MSS.* (1758).

[3] R. Raikes, *A Plan of a Society for the Support and Encouragement of Sunday Schools* (1810), p. 14. Quoted in Quinlan, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

[4] The refusal of the Wesleyan Methodist Conference to sanction secular education on Sundays, although widely ignored, was a further source of conflict after 1791. See J. Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 109: M. Johnson, W. Rinder, and J. Hodgson, *A Reply to Various False Statements and Gross Misrepresentations* . . . (Leeds, 1828), p. 320; and cf. A. H. Birch, *Small Town Politics—A Study of Political Life in Glossop* (1959), pp. 20–21, and Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 374, 401.

For putting forward a not dissimilar argument, Halévy has been criticized on the grounds that education produced, not a docile, efficient work force, but a militant trade-union movement. In the long run this was no doubt so. But it is surely not inconsistent to argue that, although evangelically inspired education resulted in industrial unrest, it also increased both the potential and actual productivity of labour. For such education was an investment in human resources. If the product of that investment had been negative, it is difficult to see how the Industrial Revolution could have proceeded.

One final point is more abstract, but no less real. Since Durkheim it has been a commonplace of the theory of social change that in successful social development differentiation implies integration. In eighteenth-century urban England the fellowship of the religious meeting was the most readily appreciable integrative factor in the experience of a significant proportion of the population. Unlike the factory, which might, too, have been a vehicle of integration, the chapel was open to the whole family on equal terms. In it, the pew system accorded rank and status to those who had earned them. To those who had not, the free sittings constituted an invitation to share in the common corporate life of the Church. The best original expression of the *koinonia* of the chapel came from Joseph Priestley. 'We are partakers of one common banquet and all the numerous distinctions of worldly situation and circumstance entirely disappear. The rich and the poor, the servants and the master, the young and the old, and learned and the unlearned . . . all sit down at the same table.'[1] Like the Wesleyans, the Calvinists saw the local church as the central point of reference in the social orientation of the individual. Administratively, this was reflected in the mutual care and concern of the class and the church meeting.[2] Sacramentally, it was reflected, especially in the Baptist Church, by a formal and formidable token of membership.

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[1] *Eclectic Review* (1812), p. 652.

[2] Letter on Infant Schools to *Leeds Mercury*, 12 June 1830. Cf. Report of Holbeck Guardian Society, *Leeds Mercury*, 2 May 1835.

But it was for the middle classes that the fellowship had the higher value. As in any group, a financial freemasonry developed as part of the corporate life of the Church. Sometimes it was the common interest in trade that kept the Church together. The commercial oligarchy attracted birds of a similar feather. 'The chief bonds of our societies have been family connexions, the promotion of trade, large finances or some other worldly ties.'[3] The Presbyterian and Unitarian churches maintained their patrician membership not through any dogmatic or organizational exclusiveness, but because membership of the Church conferred, in this sense, commercial advantage. To a lesser extent, the same was true of other churches and other social groups. Once a nucleus of merchants or entrepreneurs had emerged, it tended to grow. Censure of the group's values had no effect. Like attracts like, and the emergence of local mercantile oligarchies could not easily be stopped by ministerial invective. For the individual, membership of that oligarchy was not only a status symbol—it was a commercial asset.

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[1] Undated, unentitled, *MS. Communion Address at Manchester College, Oxford.* Cf. Birch, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–22.

[2] Cf. Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp. 364–5, 378–9. Thompson's account is very biased by his dislike of the Methodists. Although this corporate responsibility could be corrupted into officiousness, it is unhistorical to represent this as the norm.

[3] 'A Congregationalist', *The Causes and Reasons of the Present Declension among the Congregational Churches in London and Country* (1766), p.4.

5

In summary, of the four denominations we have investigated, only the Unitarians seem to have had a sufficiently unambivalent attitude to wealth and economic enterprise, together with a disproportionately entrepreneurial and rich membership, to allow an a-prioristic case for a causal relationship to be built up. However, we have argued that it is naïve to see a simple or unidirectional causal connexion: simultaneity implies even less about causality than does succession. In place of the neo-Weberianism that has tended to see a direct causal relationship between religious belief and economic motivation, we regard as more historical, if less fertile, an account that lays emphasis on the long-run effect of the changing theological climate, which created or reformed institutions, mores, and social structures. This, of course, implies that religious change involves personal change, and it might therefore be objected that we are letting Weber in by the back door. But we have never sought to deny Weber's valuable insight into the rôle of religion in shaping aspirations, motivations, and reactions. What we do deny is the kind of direct, unique relationship between church dogmatics and economic practice that neo-Weberians have postulated: and we remain, at best, highly sceptical of Weber's own analysis in terms of the conflict of interests. Only much more detailed, largely local, research on these denominations and others—notably Quakers—will enable historians finally to resolve this tortuous problem.

A. W. Coats

5 The Classical Economists and The Labourer

In his important study, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), E. P. Thompson revived two familiar themes of nineteenth-century romantic and socialist literature—condemnation of the social evils of the industrial revolution and bitter criticism of the classical economists, and in his treatment of the latter he went far beyond either the Hammonds or the Webbs. It was Arnold Toynbee who remarked that the protracted debate between the disciples of Ricardo and the human beings had ended with 'the conversion of the economists',[1] and as this caricature of the classical economist as the personification of man's congenital inhumanity to man has long been popular among undergraduates, it is worth re-examining the original with some care.

To sketch the main outlines of the classical economists' attitude to early nineteenth-century conditions is, however, no easy task. Against the humanitarian and socialist indictment can be set an equally polemical liberal defence of classical economics, and distinguished academic authorities fully armed with apt quotations from the writings of the accused can be mustered on both sides. Any student who wishes to make up his own mind on the matter faces a formidable task, for after immersing himself in innumerable books, monographs, pamphlets, magazine articles, reports, minutes of evidence, speeches, and letters, he must endeavour to condense complex discussions, reconcile inconsistencies, assess successive changes of opinion, and above all thread his way

[1] A. Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution* (1884). Cf. E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), pp. 224, 265, 313, 341, 543, 552, etc.

through those terminological, conceptual, and factual disagreements that inevitably arise whenever two or three economists are gathered together. The following pages represent a modest attempt to present an impartial summary view of the classical economists' attitude to the labourer.[1] Instead of the familiar questions about the nature and validity of the labour theory of value, the Ricardian theory of production and distribution, the wages fund, etc., which form the staple diet of historians of economic theory, we shall ask what the classical economists knew of the labourer's difficulties, his motives, and his aspirations. Were they hostile, sympathetic, or indifferent? Were they perhaps well intentioned, but blinded by their own values and prejudices? And were their policy recommendations—especially those designed to relieve poverty and to promote economic progress—derived from abstract speculation, totally unrelated to current conditions; or were they based on genuine efforts to obtain trustworthy evidence?

Before commencing this inquiry, however, it is advisable to dispose of an elementary methodological point, one that would hardly be worth mentioning had it not been a fruitful source of serious, sometimes deliberate and wilful, misunderstanding. The classical economists were neither poets nor novelists; they were aspiring social scientists—the first 'professional economists', and therefore we should not expect to find in their writings the kind of insights into the infinite complexity, variety, and subtlety of the human personality that we might legitimately seek in the works of the literary men. As the antithetical terms 'classical' and 'romantic' suggest, the Ricardians and the lakeland poets were interested in different things and asked different kinds of questions; it is, therefore, hardly surprising that they obtained very different, though not always incompatible, answers.[2] The classical economists were deeply concerned about individual freedom and happiness; but, as economists, they dealt with 'man in the aggregate—with states not with families; with general passions and propensities, not with those which occasionally influence the individual'.[3] This preoccupation does not, of course, excuse unsound generalizations, or a neglect of relevant differences—whether sex, age, family, occupational, or regional—in labour conditions. But we are chiefly concerned with the nature and quality of

[1] See *Note* for an account of the sources used in this essay.

[2] The same is often true, *mutatis mutandis*, of the 'optimistic' and 'pessimistic' interpreters of the Industrial Revolution. Cf. W. Woodruff, 'Capitalism and the Historians', *Journal of Economic History*, XVI (1956), *passim*.

[3] J. R. McCulloch, *A Discourse on the Rise, Progress, Peculiar Objects and Importance of Political Economy* (1824).

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their performance as social scientists, and we must not convict them of failure to perform a task that was no part of their intention.

I

As social scientists, the classical economists endeavoured to formulate general principles, and although they repeatedly used hypothetical 'models'—what Ricardo called 'strong cases'—to illustrate the operation of these principles, they claimed that their generalizations were based on 'fact and experiment', and did not hesitate to cite empirical data in support of their arguments. Thus the widely held notion that classical economics was a tissue of abstractions built on *a priori* assumptions is erroneous; but it is no easy matter to determine the exact relationship between general principles and particular facts in the classical literature.[1] Malthus's *Essay on Population*, for instance, is rightly said to have become longer and longer and duller and duller with successive editions as he incorporated the results of his extensive search for demographic evidence to buttress his central law; but while the younger authors came to the conclusion that the weight of evidence was against Malthus's theory, Malthus himself made only minor changes after his second edition.[2] Much the same is true of McCulloch, whose desire to base political economy on 'fact' rather than 'hypothesis' led him to publish several editions of his massive *Dictionary of Commerce* and his *Statistical Account of the British Empire*. He ridiculed the efforts of those 'intrepid calculators' who 'have amused themselves by framing estimates of the value of plate, furniture, clothes etc. belonging to individuals', because 'there are no data whatsoever on which to construct such estimates—which are, in fact, good for nothing unless it be to throw discredit on all statistical computations'. As far as the condition of the people was concerned, McCulloch declared that

> there is no subject about which so many contradictory assertions are made, by those pretending to be acquainted with it, as the state of

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[1] For a recent disagreement on this point, cf. Mark Blaug, *Ricardian Economics: a Historical Study* (1958), pp. 182–8, and B. A. Corry, *Money, Saving and Investment in English Economics 1800–1850* (1962), pp. 10–12. (On the whole the present writer endorses Dr. Corry's view.) See also W. J. Ashley's introduction to J. S. Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1920), pp. xviii–xx.

[2] See Blaug, *Ricardian Economics*, ch. 6, for a summary of the changing attitudes to the Malthusian Law of population.

> the middle and lower classes in all parts of the country. We, in fact, *have no real knowledge of the matter.* There are no authentic accounts of the qualities and current prices of articles in any great market, the rent of houses and lodgings, the rate of wages in proportion to the work done, and a variety of other particulars, indispensable to be known before anyone can pretend to estimate the condition of the bulk of the people, or to compare their state at one period with their state at another . . . Ministers are quite as much in the dark as to these matters as other people. The Secretary for the Home Department is about as well informed respecting the demand for labour, wages, diet, dress and other accommodations of the people of Canton and Manilla, as of those of Manchester and Paisley. Were he questioned on the subject, he would, of course, affirm, and perhaps truly, that the manufacturing labourers in the last-mentioned towns were highly prosperous. . . .[1]

Nevertheless, despite his ardent desire for more extensive and reliable information, McCulloch's own appraisal of the compatibility between his theories and the facts leaves much to be desired. As is well known, he was a sincere disciple of Ricardo, and his confidence in the validity of Ricardian principles was seldom disturbed by evidence that ran counter to his presuppositions.

Before condemning this attitude, however, we must remember that the evidence was often unreliable, and could not be used to falsify *general theoretical* principles. How, for example, was Torrens to adjust his theory of wages to take account of the earnings of cotton workers employed in 'common mule spinning about No 36 weft, or 36 hanks to the lb' when his sources indicated that in computing such wages 'much depends upon the quality of cotton etc. furnished by the master; also upon the state of repair etc. in which machinery is kept, likewise upon the attention of both manager and operative'?[1] This is, of course, an extreme case, and it is no part of our purpose to offer a blanket defence of the classical economists' use of evidence. As Ricardo wisely observed, 'There are perhaps very few men who are not in some degree biased either by the love of their party of by the love of their favourite system',[2] and his fellow economists were human in this as in other respects. Since their primary objective was to construct a theoretical system, they were naturally reluctant—and often rightly so—to abandon their hard-won generalizations as a result of new and conflicting evidence which could usually be dismissed either as unsound, unrepresentative, or the product of 'disturbing causes' which had been specifically excluded from the theorists' model. As the philosopher Morris Cohen has said, 'It is only as a last resort that we modify (as little as possible) the old ideas. If we did not hold on to our old ideas tenaciously, if we threw them away the moment they encountered difficulties, we could never develop any strong ideas and our science would have no continuity of development.'[3]

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[1] McCulloch (ed.), *A Statistical Account of the British Empire*, II (1839), pp. 507–8; also *ibid.*, I, viii. McCulloch, 'State and Defects of British Statistics', *Edinburgh Review*, CXXIII (1835), p. 175. (Hereinafter cited as *Edin. Rev.*). Italics in original. Also McCulloch's evidence before the *Select Committee on Public Documents* (1833), pp. 12–16. He advocated the establishment of a Board of Statistics in London like those in Europe, with agents in the principal manufacturing towns. For an example of a case where McCulloch claimed to have decisively changed his opinion in response to 'consideration of the historical facts with respect to the operation of the principle', see *Select Committee on the State of the Poorer Classes in Ireland* (1830), pp. 590–1. In many other cases the classical economists openly admitted that there were important disagreements among qualified observers with respect both to facts and proposals for reform. For example, Senior, *Letters on the Factory Act* (2nd ed., 1844), pp. 30 ff.

On the other hand, as time passed, the accumulation of evidence of contemporary economic conditions figured ever more prominently in the classical economists' writings, and their individual attitudes toward the problems of poverty, factory legislation, public health, and so forth underwent significant modifications as their knowledge of the facts increased. On matters of fundamental principle they were often unduly rigid, and their conception of the labourer's predicament was undoubtedly seriously deficient. Yet, as we shall see, it was neither without empirical foundations nor wholly irrelevant to the facts of contemporary life. The classical economists were neither ignorant of nor indifferent to current evils, for their pages contain innumerable eloquent and detailed passages about the hardships encountered by such special groups as the Spitalfields silk workers, the London coal whippers, the Coventry ribbon-makers, the Nottingham lace-makers, the inevitable handloom weavers, and many others. Their lengthy and impassioned accounts of the degradation of the Irish peasantry and the English rural paupers were designed to warn the English working man—who, they believed, was in a significantly more favourable condition—of the dangers that accompanied reckless, idle, and improvident conduct. And, with the benefit of hindsight, we can now see that their hopes for long-term improvement (and they were mainly concerned with the long run) were not wholly unjustified.

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[1] Robert Torrens, *The Budget, On Commercial and Colonial Policy* (1844), p. 326. Elsewhere he distinguished between 'speaking statistically' and speaking 'hypothetically upon the principles of political economy'. *Select Committee on the Disposal of Lands in the British Colonies* (1836), p. 140.

[2] In a letter to James Mill, 9 Nov. 1817. Cf. P. Sraffa and M. H. Dobb (eds.), *The Works and Correspondence of David Ricardo*, VII (1952), p. 205. (Subsequently cited as *Ricardo's Works*.)

[3] Morris R. Cohen, *Reason and Nature, An Essay on the Nature of Scientific Method* (1931), p. 27. For reasons why the economists were reluctant to abandon their hard-won positions, see my article 'The Role of Authority in the Development of British Economics', *Journal of Law and Economics* (Oct. 1964).

2

The classical economists' conception of the labourer's predicament and prospects was based on a theory of human nature and motivation that can broadly be termed utilitarian.[1] From Locke, Hume, and Adam Smith, they inherited the notion that all men are fundamentally alike in respect of their native characteristics and potentialities, but since they also believed that environment exerted a profound influence on men's actual habits and customs, their views on specific issues comprised a changing amalgam of long-term and short-term elements which cannot easily be summarized.

On the whole, their middle-class perspective, reinforced by their genuine desire to elevate the lower orders, led the economists to underestimate the difficulties of realizing the labourer's *bourgeois* potentialities—the qualities of self-reliance, thrift, prudence, industriousness, etc., which they believed were latent in every man. According to Senior, the independent labourer was the 'normal type . . . the natural offspring of the Saxon race', whose customary virtues would readily reassert themselves once the 'rash interference' of the State ceased, while the sanguine McCulloch maintained that:

> The poor have, upon plain and practical questions that touch their immediate interests, the same understanding, the same penetration, and the same regard to consequences as those who are rich. It is indeed a contradiction, and an absurdity to pretend, that if the labourers are capable of earning, by an ordinary degree of application, more than is sufficient to support them, they alone, of all the various classes of society, will spend the surplus in riot and debauchery. They have the same common sense, they are actuated by

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[1] On the intellectual background see Leslie Stephen, *The English Utilitarians* (1900); and Elie Halévy, *The Growth of Philosophic Radicalism* (1928).

> the same passions, feelings, and principles as other men; and when such is the case, it is clear that they cannot generally be guilty of such inconsiderate conduct.[1]

There is, accordingly, an important current of optimism in the classical literature, despite the gloomy shadow cast by the Malthusian law of population. Even Malthus, who held that the labourer's desire for self-improvement was 'perfectly feeble' by comparison with the 'passion between the sexes', allowed himself some cheerful prognostications in the later editions of his *Essay*—provided, of course, that his policy recommendations were adopted.[2] McCulloch and Senior went much further, and resembled Adam Smith in their belief that the diffusion of a spirit of emulation, a desire for respectability, and the opportunity to acquire a taste for the luxuries and conveniences of life, would greatly promote the long-run economic and social improvement of the lower orders. Underlying this attitude was a residue of eighteenth-century faith in progress that persisted throughout the strains and stresses of early nineteenth century industrialism.[3] When Senior observed approvingly that the gradations of wealth in England were insensible, he was echoing the eighteenth-century view that a nation benefits from 'an easy gradation from rank to rank';[4] and one of the main reasons for the classical economists' stress on the need for education was their conviction that vertical social mobility was both possible and desirable.

Of course there were notable exceptions and qualifications in this as in most other matters. McCulloch, for instance, took a far more hierarchical view of the interrelationships between social classes than most of his fellow economists.

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[1] Nassau W. Senior, 'Poor Law Reform', *Edin. Rev.*, CXLIX (1841), reprinted in his *Historical and Philosophical Essays* (1865), pp. 97–98. Cf. McCulloch, 'Combination Laws, Restraints on Emigration', *Edin. Rev.*, LXXVIII (1824), p. 334.

[2] William Hazlitt declared that Malthus's excessively 'amorous complexion' led him to suppose that all other men were made of 'the same combustible materials'. Cf. Stephen, *op. cit.*, II, p. 255. Cf. D. E. C. Eversley, *Social Theories of Fertility and the Malthusian Debate* (1959), pp. 250–4, 294. Also Malthus, *An Essay on Population* (Everyman ed., 1914), II, pp. 206, 257–61. For Malthus's attempt to defend his law of population while retaining his optimism, see Senior, *Two Lectures on Population* (1831), pp. 68 ff.

[3] See, for example, S. G. Checkland, 'Growth and Progress: The Nineteenth Century View in Britain', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XII (1959), esp. pp. 49–53.

[4] Senior, 'Ireland', *Edin. Rev.*, CLIX (1844), p. 194. But compare his unpublished lectures of 1849–50 quoted by Leon Levy (ed.), in *Industrial Efficiency and Social Economy* (n.d), I, p. 322. For a useful background essay on this question see Asa Briggs, 'The Language of "Class" in Early Nineteenth Century England', in *Essays in Labour History*, Asa Briggs and John Saville (eds.) (1960), pp. 43–73.

> The distinction of rich and poor, is not as some shallow sophists would seem to suppose, artificial, but real; it is as much a part of the order of Providence as the distinction of the sexes. It depends on the differences of the mental and physical powers and dispositions of different individuals, and of the different circumstances under which they happen to be placed . . . [while] riches are evidence of superior good conduct in the vast majority of cases . . .[1]

So influential were the standards set by the higher orders of society that the constitutional details of government were unimportant provided that its leaders were men of talent and spirit. As far as the labourer's potentialities were concerned:

> If you would develop all the native resources of a man's mind, if you would bring his every faculty and power into full activity, you must make him aware of his inferiority in relation to others, and inspire him with a determination to rise to a higher level.

But in practice, he regretfully admitted, the desire to attain wealth was much more effective a spur to ambition than the desire to excel in 'learning, benevolence, or integrity'.[2]

In educational matters also the classical economists did not invariably overrate the possibility of indoctrinating the lower orders. On one occasion J. S. Mill threw up his hands in despair at the difficulties of the task.

> In England, it would hardly be believed to what a degree all that is morally objectionable in the lowest class of the working people is nourished, if not engendered, by the low state of their understandings. The infantine credulity to what they hear, when it is from their own class; their incapacity to observe what is before their eyes; their inability to comprehend or believe purposes in others which they have not been taught to expect, and are not conscious of in themselves—are the known characteristics of persons of low intellectual faculties in all classes. But what would not be equally credible without experience, is an amount of deficiency in the power of reasoning and calculation which makes them insensible to their own

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[1] *Ricardo's Works*, VIII, pp. 129, 300 (Ricardo to Malthus, 24 Nov. 1820). For Malthus's views see *ibid.*, VIII, pp. 107–8; also McCulloch, *Observations on the State of the Country, and on the Proper Policy of Administration* (1830), p. 26.

[2] McCulloch, *Outlines of Political Economy* (McVickar ed., 1825), p. 49; *Treatise on the Succession*, pp. 31, 34.

> direct personal interests. Few have considered how anyone who could instil into these people the commonest worldly wisdom—who could render them capable of even selfish prudential calculations—would improve their conduct in every relation of life, and clear the soil for the growth of right feelings and worthy propensities.[1]

This outburst was not typical, either of Mill himself or of the group; but, on the other hand, it was not unique, and as time passed there was a growing realization that the process of reforming the labouring classes would be neither quick nor easy. It was recognized that the labourer's habits could not be changed overnight, whether by moral suasion, instruction, or some comparatively straightforward legal or institutional change, and in these circumstances the persistence of optimism reflects the classical economists' faith in the typical English working man's natural virtues. When riots and disorders occurred they often defended the poor against the calumnies of the rich, and among the multifarious excuses they advanced for such unseemly conduct were the customs and excise laws—which tempted the people to maltreat the enforcement officers; the combination laws—which were both oppressive and ineffectual; the petty despotism of the magistrates, or 'that law for the encouragement of Murder and Robbery' (to cite McCulloch's words) which prohibited the sale of game.[2] Politically speaking, the classical economists occupied a wide spectrum, from the radicalism of James Mill to the High Toryism of De Quincey, and their attitude towards the 'mob' varied accordingly. The case of Peterloo is instructive, for it has often wrongly been regarded as a typical manifestation of early nineteenth-century middle- and upper-class hostility to the poor, and it was the subject of considerable discussion in Ricardo's correspondence. Ricardo himself adopted a middle-of-the-road position, describing the affair in Manchester in 1819 as cruel, illegal, and unjust, and adopting a much more temperate view of the situation than his friend Hutches Trower, who was less tolerant of the poor. Three years earlier, in 1816, Ricardo had denied that the war had degraded the morals of the people.

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[1] J. S. Mill, 'The Claims of Labour', *Edin. Rev.*, CLXIV (1845), p. 511. Cf. Senior, *Reviews of the Waverley Novels*, etc. (1821), p. 226. For James Mill's views see 'State of the Nation', *Westminster Review*, VI (1826), p. 263, and Briggs, 'Language of Class', p. 64.

[2] See, for example, McCulloch, 'Comparative Productiveness of High and Low Taxes', *Edin. Rev.*, LXXII (1822), pp. 535–6; 'Impolicy of Increasing the Duties on Spirits', *ibid.* (1830), pp. 488–9; 'Causes and Cure of Disturbances and Pauperism', *ibid.*, CV (1831), pp. 51, 60.

> The outrages of which they are at present guilty may be sufficiently accounted for from the stagnation in trade which has never failed to produce similar consequences. I am disposed to think that the people are both improved in morals and in knowledge, and therefore that they are less outrageous under these unavoidable reverses than they formerly used to be. I am in hopes too that as they increase in knowledge they will more clearly perceive that the destruction of property aggravates and never relieves their difficulties.[1]

In the specific case of Peterloo, Ricardo disapproved of the magistrates' unwarranted violation of the right of assembly, and he opposed the Six Acts for similar reasons. However, mob violence presented the middle-class intellectual with a dilemma which was epitomized in Malthus's belief that although the demands of the mob 'should not be regarded', the pressure of public opinion should not be ignored.[2] James Mill and Ricardo agreed that the real test of a reformer was his willingness to allow the people to have genuinely independent representation in Parliament, and by this criterion Ricardo comes out quite well, for although he disapproved of universal suffrage, he maintained that 'it is always unwise for a Government to set itself against the declared opinion of a very large class of the people', especially in important matters! There was, however, no consensus of opinion on the question, for Malthus and McCulloch strongly opposed universal suffrage.[3]

Although the classical literature contains few instances of unqualified class hostility towards the poor, the economists viewed the development of an urban industrial society with certain misgivings. Adam Smith had commented extensively on the differences in social outlook between rural and urban labourers, and his successors were fully aware that energetic and independent-minded workers would not submit to injustice or economic adversity without a struggle. McCulloch, for instance, conceded that the English populace was turbulent, inflammable, and easily led astray by radical demagogues, but he regarded these characteristics as inevitable concomitants of the social conditions existing in manufacturing communities, and believed that as time passed the workers' violence would diminish as their intelligence grew.[1] On several occasions, especially in times of acute crisis, individual members of the classical school expressed grave, even hysterical anxiety at the restlessness of the people; in the summer of 1841, for instance, Senior wondered whether, if the depression of the handloom weavers became widespread, 'the Peerage, or the Church, or even the Monarchy, could resist the storm'?[2] Yet these gloomy and fearful observations were made without bitterness or hostility, and it has recently been suggested that James Mill regarded the turbulence of the people as an effective way of forcing concessions from an unwilling governing class. Ideally, he believed, the people 'should appear to be ready and impatient to break out into outrage *without* actually breaking out'.[3]

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[1] Ricardo to Trower, 15 July 1916, in Sraffa, *Ricardo's Works*, VII, p. 49.

[2] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 80; III, p. 146; VI, p. 183 (Malthus to Ricardo, 10 Mar. 1815).

[3] *Ibid.*, VIII, pp. 129, 300 (Ricardo to Malthus, 24 Nov. 1820). Malthus believed that to concede universal suffrage and annual parliaments as a result of intimidation by mass meetings would be to invite a 'bloody revolution' (VIII, pp. 107–8), while McCulloch, for all his generosity towards the labouring class, predicted 'nothing but insecurity, revolution and rapine' if universal suffrage were to be adopted. Cf. *Observations on the State of the Country, and on the Proper Policy of Administration* (1830), p. 26.

The classical economists were not, of course, invariably optimistic, even though they believed that English workers were generally more highly paid, more industrious, and enjoyed better living conditions than their Continental counterparts. They were aware that unfavourable environmental conditions—whether natural, institutional or psychological—could easily undermine the labourer's virtues and reduce him to that 'degraded stratum' which was 'so low intellectually as to be almost without providence, and so low morally as to be almost without self-respect'.[4] Recognition of the importance of the psychological climate is evident in Malthus's insistence that poverty ought to be held disgraceful, and in the Benthamite principle that a pauper ought to be 'less eligible' than an independent labourer. If pauperism ever became as commonplace in England as in Ireland—where a beggar was not merely regarded as an equal, but was even welcomed at a peasant's fireside—

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[1] McCulloch, 'Rise, Progress, Present State, and Prospects of the British Cotton Manufacture', *Edin. Rev.*, XCI (1827), pp. 37–38. J. S. Mill concurred; see his *Principles*, pp. 756–7. For Smith's views see also Nathan Rosenberg, 'Adam Smith on The Division of Labour: Two Views or One?', *Económica* N.S. XXXII (1965), pp. 127–139.

[2] Senior, 'Grounds and Objects of the Budget', *Edin. Rev.*, CXLVIII (1841), pp. 506–11, 518. Cf. Torrens, *Address to the Farmers of the United Kingdom on the Low Rates of Profit in Agriculture and in Trade* (1831), p. 13; and 'A Paper on the Means of Reducing the Poor's Rates', *The Pamphleteer*, X (1817), p. 524. Also McCulloch, 'Causes and Cure of Disturbances', pp. 62–63.

[3] Cf. Joseph Hamberger, *James Mill and the Art of Revolution* (1964), p. 115. Italics in original. A severe critic of the aristocracy, Mill was nevertheless no uncritical admirer of the populace. See his 'State of the Nation', pp. 263–7.

[4] Senior, quoted from unpublished lectures 1849–50 by Levy, *Industrial Efficiency*, I, p. 305.

the English labourer's cherished sense of self-reliance would be crushed.[1] Socio-psychological influences could, of course, work in either direction, for even the Irish had been known to develop sound morals and industrious habits after settling in England and coming into daily contact with native workers; but it would be folly to take undue risks—hence the classical economists' almost obsessive hostility to the so-called Speenhamland system, which so dangerously blurred the crucial distinction between the pauper and the independent labourer.

At times this distinction seems to have been treated as if it defined a point of unstable equilibrium, above or below which there were prospects of continuous improvement or deterioration in the labourer's condition.[2] Certainly, in their policy recommendations the classical economists were anxious to find the right psychological balance between the stick of necessity and the carrot of incentives. In fiscal matters, for example, McCulloch accepted Hume's view that while moderate taxes would encourage effort, exorbitant taxes would engender hopelessness and despair; but only J. S. Mill among the later classical economists recognized Hume's subtle distinction between 'active' and 'passive' habits of work, for they almost exclusively emphasized the disutility of labour.[3] Similarly, Malthus repeatedly stated that although 'fear of want' (combined with the hope of bettering his condition) was necessary to keep the independent labourer industrious, 'actual want' was wholly destructive because indigence 'palsies every virtue'.[4] As McCulloch observed, in characteristically confident tones:

> It would, however, be a most detestable policy, waiving the question of practicability, to attempt to reduce the labouring classes to a scanty supply of the mere necessities of life. The experience of all ages has shown that a needy and starving populace lose a sense of their dignity and rights as men, and become depraved and enslaved. It is vain to expect industry where it does not meet with a suitable

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[1] Senior, 'The Poor Law in Ireland', *Edin. Rev.*, CLVI (1843), pp. 400–1. Cf. James Mill, *Elements of Political Economy* (1826), p. 58; and 'State of the Nation', p. 263.

[2] J. S. Mill emphasized the obstacles to improvement, *Principles*, pp. 348–9, and note, while Malthus identified a 'wretchedly poor' sub-stratum incapable of reproducing themselves. *Essay*, II, pp. 143–4, 209, 214–15.

[3] McCulloch, *An Article on Taxation*, p. 5. Also 'Progress of the National Debt, Best Method of Funding', *Edin. Rev.*, XCIII (1828), p. 82. Cf. E. Rotwein (ed.), *David Hume, Writings on Economics* (1955), xiii; J. S. Mill, *Principles*, p. 286.

[4] Malthus, *Essay*, II, pp. 143, 177. For Senior's opposing view see Levy *Industrial Efficiency*, I, p. 12.

> reward; men will not submit to privations and labour, but in the hope of securing corresponding comforts.[1]

This theme was repeatedly illustrated by reference to the Irish labourers, whose predicament was variously attributed to oppressive government by the English, insecurity, the prevalence of poverty in their midst, and concomitant defects of character such as idleness, dissipation, improvidence, inefficiency, recklessness, cruelty, violence, vindictiveness, and ignorance (a point on which there was some disagreement). Despite their belief in the influence of environment on character, the classical economists could not agree about the prospects of reforming the Irish. Some feared that Irish immigrants would contaminate the English labour force, and favoured immigration restrictions; but Senior, who had first-hand knowledge of Irish conditions, and a less favourable view of the English labourer than McCulloch, was shocked by this suggestion. As 'an inhabitant of the British Empire' he declared himself

> inexpressibly disgusted at the wish to deprive the Irish labourer of his resort to England. . . . The evidence is full of the improvement in habits, of feelings introduced into Ireland by those who have visited England.

And he endeavoured to buttress his argument by the (somewhat dubious) assertion that in counties like Lancashire, Cumberland, and Westmorland, where the Irish were very numerous, wage rates were among the highest and the proportion of poor rates to population among the lowest of any part of the country.[2]

The question of the influence of insecurity on the labourers' incentives provides yet another illustration of the need for an appropriate psychological climate, and reveals the dangers of simple generalizations about the classical outlook. Fluctuations of prices and wages, like irregularities of employment, were generally believed to discourage thrift and steady industry. By comparison with the British worker, Senior observed,

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[1] McCulloch, *An Essay on the Question of Reducing the Interest on the National Debt* (1816), pp. 132–3

[2] Senior, *A Letter to Lord Howick, On a Legal Provision for the Irish Poor* (1831), pp. 46–48, 50. In *An Outline of the Science of Political Economy* (1836), p. 134, he hinted that in London and its environs Irish competition was pushing English labourers up the socio-economic ladder. For contrary views see Malthus, *Select Committee on Emigration* (1827), pp. 312–13; McCulloch, 'Ireland', *Edin. Rev.*, LXXIII (1822), p. 62, and *Statistical Account*, I, p. 397; Torrens, *On Wages and Combination* (1834), pp. 31–32, and *The Budget*, p. 117; T. De Quincey, *The Logic of Political Economy* (1844), p. 145 n., 147–8 n. On immigration restrictions see James Mill, 'State of the Nation', p. 246; McCulloch *Select Committee on the State of the Poorer Classes in Ireland* (1830), pp. 584–5.

> foreign labour is ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-lodged . . . it is at least secure of employment. The only accidents to which it is subject are accidents of the seasons. Such a population necessarily acquires habits of economy and prudence.[1]

The earnings of casual workers should, therefore, not only be sufficient to support them in periods of enforced idleness; their wages 'ought also to afford them', as Adam Smith remarked, 'some compensation for those anxious and desponding moments which the thought of so precarious a situation must sometimes occasion'.[2] In dangerous trades like mining and grinding, however, recklessness was observed to be a discernible occupational trait, and this might be attributable either to the influence of occupation on character or to the fact that such occupations attracted certain types of individuals. Senior seems to have taken the latter view, for he remarked that the general dislike of 'steady, regular labour' was so strong 'that the opportunities of idleness afforded by an occupation of irregular employment are so much more than an equivalent for its anxiety as to reduce the annual wages of such occupations below the common average'.[3]

But while insecurity was harmful, security was not an unmitigated advantage. Apart from the pernicious consequences of guaranteeing a pauper his income irrespective of his efforts, even the security of property could be harmful, unless it was coupled with opportunities of self-improvement. The peasant proprietor, said McCulloch, was believed to be 'exempted from those painful anxieties that embitter the existence of day labourers, and of occupiers liable to be turned out of their holdings'; but in practice, the independence and security conferred by a patch of land is

> uniformly associated with poverty, frequently degenerating into destitution; it gives rise to the most revolting of all combinations,

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[1] Senior, 'Grounds and Objects of the Budget', p. 504. He believed that improvidence was the British workman's greatest weakness.

[2] McCulloch, *Principles of Political Economy* (1870), p. 129. Similarly J. S. Mill's evidence on savings among building workers, *Select Committee on Investment for the Savings of the Middle and Working Classes* (1850), p. 89.

[3] Senior, *Outline of Political Economy*, p. 208. Cf. McCulloch, *Treatise on Wages*, p. 55.

> that of penury, pride, and laziness; and instead of expanding, contracts and benumbs every faculty . . . the happiness of peasant proprietors seems very much akin to that of the oyster—they are ignorant and satisfied.[1]

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Industriousness and efficiency were among the English labourer's greatest merits, and in general the classical economists believed that the high average wages of labour in Britain represented a just reward for high productivity. 'To complain of our high wages', Senior caustically observed,

> is to complain that our labour is productive—to complain that our workpeople are diligent and skilful. To act on such complaints is as wise as to enact that all men should labour with only one hand, or stand idle four days in every week. . . . The well-directed labour of an Englishman is worth twice as much as that of any inhabitant of Europe; it is worth four or five times as much as the labour of the less advantaged European districts; and it is worth twelve or fifteen times as much as the labour of the most civilized Asiatic nations.[2]

However, Senior went far beyond his fellow economists in extolling the benefits of hard work, although he himself defined employment as 'toil, trouble, exposure, and fatigue', all of which were evils *per se*.

> The poor and half-employed Irish labourer, or the still poorer and less industrious savage is as inferior in happiness as he is in income to the hard-worked English artisan. The Englishman's industry may sometimes be excessive, his desire to better his condition may sometimes drive him to toils productive of disease ill recompensed by the increase of his wages,

but such an outcome is unusual, despite 'the apparent unhealthiness of many of their occupations [and] the atmosphere of smoke and steam in which they labour for seventy-two hours a week', as is shown by the fact that the expectation of life in England is above that of the 'lightly-toiled inhabitants of the most favoured soils and climates', and still rising. This striking inconsistency is probably due to Senior's concern at the English labourers' propensity to dissipate their surplus earnings on idleness and debauchery.

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[1] McCulloch, *A Treatise on the Succession*, pp. 89–90. J. S. Mill took exactly the opposite view. Cf. *Principles*, Bk. II, ch. VI and VIII.

[2] Senior, *Three Lectures on the Cost of Obtaining Money* (1830), p. 28; *Three Lectures on the Transmission of the Precious Metals* (1830), pp. 93–94. Cf. Malthus, *Essay*, II, p. 174.

> When wages are high, they work fewer hours and inhabit better houses; and, if there still remain a superfluity the women and girls waste it in dress, and the men in drink or luxurious living. When wages fall, they endeavour to increase their earnings by more assiduous labour, and to economize, first in house-rent, then in dress, then in fuel, and ultimately in food. When their earnings become insufficient for a maintenance, they throw themselves on the parish. The virtue of which they possess the least is providence.[1]

Neither Malthus nor James Mill, nor yet Ricardo, was an unqualified advocate of high wages, though in general they assumed that slowly rising wages would be accompanied by improved habits and higher productivity. McCulloch, however, unhesitatingly denounced the 'common and hackneyed complaint, which the interested views of the master manufacturers, and fanatical declamation, have contributed to make too much believed' that high wages encouraged riot and debauchery, and were therefore harmful to the workers and to the State. On the contrary, he declared, in words reminiscent of the eighteenth-century economist, Malachy Postlethwayt:

> High wages are only advantageous because of the increased comforts they bring along with them; and of these, an addition to the time which may be devoted to the purposes of amusement, is certainly not one of the least. Whenever wages are high, and little subject to fluctuation, the labourers are found to be active, intelligent and industrious. But they do not prosecute their employment with the same intensity as those who are obliged, by the pressure of the severest necessity, to strain every nerve to the utmost. They are

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[1] Senior, *Three Lectures on the Rate of Wages* (1830), pp. 52, 16–17; 'Grounds and Objects of the Budget', p. 505; 'Poor Law Reform', *Edin. Rev.*, CXLIX (1841), p. 3; *Introductory Lecture on Political Economy* (1827), p. 12. For inconsistent statements by Senior, cf., *Outline of . . . Political Economy*, p. 55, and Levy, *Industrial Efficiency*, II, p. 298.

> enabled to enjoy their intervals of ease and relaxation; and they would be censurable if they did not enjoy them.[1]

Malthus, too, agreed that indolence might be advantageous under certain circumstances if, by restricting labour productivity when the demand for labour was ample, it checked an incipient tendency for wages to fall, while Ricardo on one occasion undermined the general classical attitude towards industriousness by admitting that the indolent labourer might be happier than his hard-working counterpart, provided that he had enough to eat.[2]

Whatever the effect of high wages on the effort of labour, the classical economists fully appreciated that high money wages did not necessarily mean high labour costs per unit of output. Senior contended that the Englishman's superior productivity was due to the growth of our population, the variety of wants, and our greater 'powers of production', while Torrens drew attention to our mechanical inventions, our superior manual dexterity and skill, and our more productive coal-mines. In the 1840s, however, Torrens painted a gloomy picture of the decline of our comparative advantages owing to diminishing returns in agriculture, the corn laws, and the tendency of the powers of production to outgrow 'the field of employment'—presenting a kind of stagnation thesis associated with his advocacy of colonization.[3] De Quincey also feared for the English labourer who, he argued, was facing the triple threat of Irish competition, machinery, and child labour. Only a determined adherence to 'the high standard of comfort inherited from his English ancestors' could protect him from experiencing 'the very basest human degradation ever witnessed amongst oriental slaves'.[4]

Before about 1830 the tendency of population to outstrip the means of subsistence seemed to be the most serious threat to the labourer's standard of living, and against this threat the economists had little better to offer than the removal of impediments to capital accumulation and the advocacy of moral restraint on the part of the labouring classes. No part of classical doctrine has aroused more hostility (either at the time or since) than the advocacy of moral restraint, and it is therefore important to recognize that Malthus, who introduced the concept, distinguished carefully between moral restraint and prudence. While both entailed the postponement of marriage until the parties concerned could afford to support a family, the former also required chastity before marriage and was an ideal—one that has aptly been said to belong more to a sermon than to political economy.[1]

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[1] McCulloch, *Principles*, pp. 93–94; *Essay on Reducing the Interest*, pp. 133–4; cf., 'Effects of Machinery on Accumulation', *Edin. Rev.*, LXIX (1821), pp. 105–6. Also, Malthus, *Essay*, II, pp. 45, 215, 255; and *Ricardo's Works*, VI, p. 225; James Mill, *Elements*, pp. 242–3, 245.

[2] Malthus, 'Newenham and Others on the State of Ireland', *Edin. Rev.*, XXIV (1808), p. 341; Sraffa, *Ricardo's Works*, VIII, p. 185.

[3] Torrens, *The Budget*, pp. 234, 288.

[4] De Quincey, *Logic of Political Economy*, pp. 147–8.

As Malthus himself recognized, moral restraint was unlikely to be achieved in practice. Prudence, on the other hand, was not only attainable: at home it was the main cause of 'a degree of happiness, superior to what could be expected from the soil and climate', while in Europe it was both increasing and likely to continue to increase in the future. Habits of prudential restraint were usually due to the custom of enjoying conveniences and comforts, although liberty, security of property, and the diffusion of knowledge played a contributory role.[2] Given a decent standard of living, the labourer was unlikely to propagate his species without regard to the consequences, which helps to explain the classical economists' desire to prevent real wages from falling. But here, too, apart from the level of real income, social considerations such as 'the desire to be thought respectable' played an important role. According to Senior:

> Want of actual necessaries is seldom apprehended by any except the poorest classes in any country. And in England, though it is sometimes felt, it probably is anticipated by none. When an Englishman stands hesitating between love and prudence, a family really starving is not among his terrors. Against actual want he knows that he has the fence of the poor laws. But, however humble his desires, he cannot contemplate, without anxiety, a probability that the income which supported his social rank while single, may be insufficient to maintain that when he is married; that he may be unable to give his children the advantages of education which he enjoys himself; in short, that he may lose his caste.[3]

Underlying their reliance on the prudential check was the classical economists' dedication to the principle of individual freedom, their firm belief in the labourer's capacity for self-improvement without the intervention of any external agency—whether autocratic, paternalistic or philanthropic, and their conviction that co-operation between the various social classes and ranks was both possible and desirable. The future of the labouring classes, and of society in general, depended on a kind of co-partnership between the well-to-do and the poor, in which the former provided an appropriate framework of laws and a rate of savings and capital accumulation sufficient to ensure a high demand for labour, and the latter—being the more numerous class—exercised a proper degree of restraint over the growth of numbers.[1] However unjust it might seem, postponement of marriage was less necessary among the middle and upper classes, who could afford to bear the costs of their own imprudence. But it is worth mentioning that Ricardo, Malthus, and James Mill had between them a total of twenty children, and the joy with which each new arrival was recorded in Ricardo's correspondence was not unmixed with feelings of irresponsibility—even though it never produced a response like that of Francis Place, who said of a group of his utilitarian friends: 'mustering among us no less, I believe, than 36 children, rare fellows we to teach moral restraint'.[2]

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[1] Kenneth Smith, *The Malthusian Controversy* (1951), p. 42. Cf. Malthus, 'Godwin on Malthus', *Edin. Rev.*, LXX (1821), p. 373.

[2] Malthus, *Essay*, I, pp. 236, 315; II, pp. 168, 175, 208, 257.

[3] Senior, *Lectures on Population*, pp. 26–27; *Outline of Political Economy*, p. 38. Cf. Malthus, *Essay*, I, pp. 12–13.

Despite the grave shortcomings of Malthus's proposals, they were well intentioned, for he ardently wished to protect domestic happiness from the misery of poverty caused by overpopulation. Similarly, his stern opposition to parochial aid stemmed from his conviction that it would destroy the precious ties of parental affection and responsibility. But as he insisted that the labourer should normally support his own children, the wisdom and timing of the labourer's decision to marry became matters of great importance, and this decision was presumed to depend on the bridegroom's estimate that 'he is in a capacity to support the children that he may reasonably expect from his marriage'.[3] Even if the labourer possessed what a modern economist has called an irrational passion for dispassionate calculation, the task of estimating his probable family income and expenditure in the foreseeable future would tax the ingenuity of a trained economic forecaster, if only because of the irregularity of his prospective employment and earnings. Beyond this, however, the labourer would need to calculate his prospective progenitiveness, for Malthus ruled out contraception, and evidently assumed that the happy couple would abandon all restraint once the period of pre-marital abstinence was over.[1]

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[1] But while population pressure was an immediate problem, capital accumulation was viewed as a slow process. See R. D. Collison Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question 1817–1870* (1960), p. 86 n.

[2] Cited by James Arthur Field, *Essays on Population* (1931), pp. 110–11.

[3] Malthus, *Essay*, II, pp. 169, 243; on domestic happiness and parental responsibility, *ibid.*, pp. 204–6. Malthus believed that restraint increased the force of the 'passion between the sexes', but also raised its quality and hence represented a civilizing influence. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Malthus was not entirely unaware of the difficulties facing those 'who had a greater number of children than they could be expected to foresee', and in the second and subsequent editions of his *Essay* he advocated the payment of allowances for every child in excess of six, a concession that stands as a notable exception to his usual hostility to State aid for the imprudent.[2] Senior also acknowledged that it was virtually impossible in practice to demonstrate that any given marriage was improvident, because of the potential earning power of wives and children.

> A girl of 18 can attend to a power loom as well as a full-grown man; a child of 13 is more valuable as a piecer than an adult—its touch is more sensitive, and its sight is more acute. A factory lad of 18 who marries a factory girl of the same age, finds himself immediately richer; and although he may be pinched during some of the following years, yet as each child attains the age of 9 years it can earn more than its support; and the earnings of 3 children between the ages of 9 and 16 can, in prosperous times, support the whole family. It was under the influence of this enormous stimulus, with some assistance from immigration, that the population of our manufacturing districts increased during the thirty years that elapsed between 1801 and 1831 —the last period for which returns are published—at a rate equalled only in some portions of America.[3]

Thus, despite their serious lack of insight into the labourer's mind and situation, the classical economists were not wholly unconscious of the practical difficulties facing a labourer who endeavoured to decide when he was able to support a family, although they clearly underestimated them. As time passed and their fears of the effects of population growth diminished, the matter came to occupy a less prominent place in their writings, although they never abandoned their insistence on the virtues of prudence.

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[1] McCulloch ridiculed Sismondi's proposal that all classes should marry freely, but live in a state of continence after producing two or three children. McCulloch to Ricardo, 18 Apr. 1819; *Ricardo's Works*, VIII, p. 25. On contraception see James Mill, 'Colony' in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (1818), pp. 12–13; also Eversley, *Social Theories of Fertility*, pp. 156–7; Field, *Essays on Population*, pp. 94, 125-6. Only James Mill seriously contemplated contraception as a possible solution.

[2] Malthus, *Essay*, II, pp. 254–5.

[3] Senior, 'Grounds and Objects of the Budget', p. 506.

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Having considered some of the psychological determinants of the economists' view of the labourer's position and prospects, we must now examine the economic determinants, and although we are not interested in theory as such, the classical theory of wages is the most suitable starting-point. This much-misunderstood theory comprised two elements: a long-term equilibrium 'natural' or 'necessary' wage rate, and a series of short-term oscillations of actual or 'market' wages. The equilibrium level was believed to alter slowly from time to time and place to place according to changes in the supply and demand for labour; but for the sake of analytical simplicity it was usually treated as a minimum governed by 'the absolutely necessary subsistence, de-demanded by the customs of the people for the maintenance of their life and the propagation of the race'.[1] The classical economists had no illusions about the adequacy of this long-term wage rate; though significantly higher in England than in Ireland or on the Continent, it was variously described as 'a miserable pittance', a sum insufficient to permit the labourer 'to economize to any extent', and an amount 'everywhere much too low for human happiness and dignity'—to select a few typical statements.[2] It is, however, essential to appreciate that this minimum was defined not in physiological terms, as a sum just sufficient for survival, but in *social* terms, as a customary or habitual minimum; and as Schumpeter observed, this 'social minimum of existence theorem' virtually amounted to accepting customary wages as an institutional datum, and abandoning the attempt at a purely *economic* explanation of the wage level.[3] Non-economic factors, such as liberty, security of property, and a taste for the comforts and conveniences of life, contributed to raise this level, while despotism and ignorance lowered it; and the object of policy should be to encourage a spirit of independence, pride, and a taste for cleanliness and comfort among the poor.[1] Beyond this, however, the classical economists made few constructive proposals designed to increase labour incentives or to create wants[2]—largely because they assumed that wants were virtually unlimited among non-pauperized labourers in advanced economies, and that given a minimum standard of living the labourer's desire to better his condition would more than counteract his distaste for hard work. Although the labourers as a class could not directly influence the demand for their services—which was governed mainly by the rate of profit and the quantity of capital, they could protect their accustomed living standards whenever wages fell temporarily by restricting the labour supply by postponement of marriage. This, of course, explains the importance which the classical economists attached to the prudential check. But this remedy obviously had grave limitations: its effects were delayed, it was no help at all to a married man with a large family, and self-restraint on the part of a couple contemplating marriage could make no perceptible difference to the aggregate labour supply. But the classical economists could offer no better solution, for they were desperately anxious to preserve the labourer's sense of independence and personal responsibility, and so they flatly opposed legal restraints or taxes on marriage such as existed in other European countries.

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[1] Michael Theodore Wermel, *The Evolution of the Classical Wage Theory* (1939), p. 162. The minimum equilibrium wage rate represented the base of a structure of wage rates that varied according to skill, length of training, unpleasantness, etc. Torrens also specified a 'moral and necessary maximum of wages'. See *On Wages and Combination*, p. 8; *The Budget*, pp. 107–8.

[2] For passing references to factors encouraging increased productivity, which usually conflicted with the customary assumption that habits changed only slowly, see McCulloch, *Outlines of Political Economy*, p. 64, and *Historical Sketch of the Bank of England* (1831), p. 40; Senior, 'Report on the State of Agriculture', *Quarterly Review*, XXV (1821), p. 485, and *Introductory Lecture on Political Economy*, p. 12.

[3] Joseph A. Schumpeter, *History of Economic Analysis* (1954), pp. 664–5.

The prospects of control over the ratio between population and subsistence obviously depended on the speed with which population responded to changes in the demand for labour. If population increased rapidly when real wages rose, the numbers seeking employment would increase and money wage rates would fall as the competition for jobs became more intense. On the other hand, if the workers readily acquired a taste for additional comforts and conveniences when real wages rose, and if population changed only after a considerable time-lag, then the labourers' conception of the socially acceptable minimum standard would rise and a new and higher equilibrium level of real wages would be established. Unfortunately the classical economists were neither unanimous nor individually consistent in their treatment of this possibility, and it is all too easy to judge them by casual remarks divorced from their context. On the whole Malthus, Ricardo, Torrens, and the two Mills regarded population growth as a serious obstacle to any permanent rise in real wages. Yet Malthus, for instance, denied that changes in real wages were the principal determinants of population change, acknowledged that there was a considerable time-lag between a rise in marriage rates and an increase in the labour supply, and in the later editions of his *Essay* placed considerable emphasis on the effectiveness of the prudential check.[1] Senior, De Quincey, and McCulloch (who periodically protested at what he called Malthus's 'mechanical theorem') also regarded the adjustment of population to changes in real wage rates as a protracted process, and considered that Malthus had exaggerated the dangers of population growth.[2] Senior 'utterly repudiated' the view that the natural rate of wages would be held down to the minimum level of subsistence, and denied that in every trade there was a stratum of workers whose ordinary wages were only equal to their necessary expenses.[3] Most of the classical economists assumed that the habits of the labouring classes changed only slowly over time, and they regarded this as both an obstacle to the reform of an impoverished and imprudent people such as the Irish and a safeguard against a deterioration of the customary standard in England when a temporary fall in real wages occurred. On the other hand, variations in the labour supply were not solely determined by changes in the number of marriages and births, for irregularity of the seasons also played a part. Despite evidence produced before the House of Commons, McCulloch insisted that money wages tended to fall in years of high prices because

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[1] Malthus, *Essay*, II, p. 215.

[2] For example, McCulloch remarked that once the practice of exchange is introduced 'a spirit of industry is universally diffused, and the apathy and languor of the rude state of society disappears'. *Outlines of Political Economy*, p. 64. Senior maintained that an increase in the supply of corn 'will produce immediately an improvement of habits and, if permanent, an increase of numbers of the labouring part of the population', 'Report on the State of Agriculture', *Quarterly Review*, XXV (1821), p. 485; and elsewhere Senior claimed that 'as soon as he begins to save, a labourer becomes sober and industrious, attentive to his health and to his character . . . no institution could be more beneficial to the morals of the lower orders, i.e. to at least nine-tenths of the whole body of any people, than one that should increase their power and their wish to accumulate', *Introductory Lecture on Political Economy*, p. 12. Cf. McCulloch, *Historical Sketch of the Bank of England* (1831), p. 40. These quotations conflict with the usual classical view that the labourer's habits changed only slowly.

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[1] Malthus, *Essay*, II, pp. 139, 257; *Principles of Political Economy* (1836), pp. 257, 280. On the other hand, Malthus' discussion of emigration schemes reveals his conviction that the 'population vacuum' would rapidly be refilled. See R. N. Ghosh, 'Malthus on Emigration and Colonization', *Economica* N.S., XXX (1963), esp. pp. 53–54.

[2] For example, Senior, *Outline of Political Economy*, pp. 43–48; and *Two Lectures on Population*, pp. 68–90; but cf. his earlier opinion, 'Report on the State of Agriculture', p. 484. McCulloch, *Principles*, p. 182; 'Chalmers on Political Economy', *Edin. Rev.*, CXI (1832), p. 56; and *An Article . . . On Taxation*, pp. 13–14; De Quincey, *Logic of Political Economy*, p. 150. Torrens, *On Wages and Combination*, p. 28. It was recognized that the effects of sudden changes in real income differed from those of more gradual changes, and this is a further reason why it is risky to summarize the classical view.

[3] Letter to Archbishop Whately, 20 Mar. 1845, cited by Levy, *Industrial Efficiency*, II, p. 26.

> an increased number of females, and such poor children of both sexes as are fit to work, are obliged to quit their homes, or to engage in some species of employment; while those labourers who work by the piece, endeavour, by increasing the quantity of their work, to obtain the means of purchasing a greater quantity of food. It is natural, therefore, that the *immediate* effect of a rise of prices, should be to lower, not to raise the rate of wages.[1]

One important source of misunderstanding of the classical view of wages is the term 'subsistence', which was rarely defined with precision. Senior, for example, carefully distinguished between 'necessaries', 'conveniences', and 'luxuries', but admitted that the components of each category were liable to change, and added that the classification of any given commodity depended on the time, the place, the habits, and the social rank of the individual consumer.[2] James Mill included 'something for enjoyment' in the category of 'necessaries', and it was invariably assumed that the English labourer's normal subsistence included some non-essentials.[3] The terms 'corn' and 'subsistence' were often used interchangeably, partly because theoretical analysis was greatly simplified by ignoring price variations between different commodities. But the distinction had important policy implications, as noted by De Quincey, who complained in 1844 that the 'corn law incendiaries' endeavoured to win converts to the anti-corn-law camp by claiming that a 10 per cent change in wheat prices was equivalent to a 10 per cent change in wages, though in other parts of their writings they denied that wages 'at all sympathize with the price of food'. Ricardo himself, whom De Quincey warmly admired, was responsible for this error.

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[1] McCulloch, *Principles*, p. 180.

[2] Senior, *Two Lectures on Population*, pp. 3–6; *Outline of Political Economy*, pp. 36–37. He believed that fear of losing the 'decencies' of life was an effective check to population growth, whereas fear of losing 'necessaries' was not, at least in England. Cf. Eversley, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[3] James Mill, *Elements*, p. 220. Torrens and James Mill believed that the labourers could not afford to pay taxes on 'necessaries', as they had no surplus income; but McCulloch, Senior, and J. S. Mill disagreed. For Ricardo's position see Carl S. Shoup, *Ricardo on Taxation* (1960), pp. 65–77.

> Yet if Ricardo were right in supposing a labourer to spend half his wages upon wheat only, then his beer, bacon, cheese, milk, butter, tea, and sugar, must proportionably cost, at the very least, all the rest of his wages; so that for clothes, lodging, fuel, to say nothing of other miscellanies, he would have no provision at all. But these are romantic estimates, and pardonable in Ricardo from his city life, which had denied him, until his latest years, all opportunities of studying the life of labourers.[1]

Although they were unable to make reliable general statistical estimates of the prices and quantities of goods consumed by the labourer and his family, the economists were well aware of the variety of components of the labourer's budget. Wheat, bread, cheese, beer, porter, sugar, tea, beef, and bacon were among the foodstuffs most commonly mentioned as the English labourer's 'necessaries', while garden vegetables, fresh butter, veal, and lamb were included among the 'agricultural luxuries'.[2] Inter-regional and international dietary comparisons were common, and it was persistently emphasized that any tendency to substitute inferior for superior foodstuffs, such as potatoes for bread, would be highly undesirable, because the inferior goods allowed less scope for retrenchment in time of dearth and because an inferior diet might become 'congenial from habit' and would then be accompanied by a fall in the labourer's economic and social aspirations, his capacity and his desire for work.[3] The importance of expenditure on non-foodstuffs was recognized, but was never subjected to systematic study.[4]

Among the principal short-term influences on the labourer's earnings the classical economists listed irregularity of the seasons, the caprices of fashion, domestic commotions, and policy changes at home and abroad. They recognized that time-lags occurred between price changes and movements of wages, and that in the interim some labourers and their families might either be thrown on the parish or, alternatively, might dissipate any windfall gains in idleness and luxury. The relationship between wages and 'subsistence'—i.e. the prices of those commodities that constituted the labourer's customary purchases—was held to be close, but neither direct nor exact, and Senior aptly depicted the classical view by describing the belief that wages were determined by the price of corn as a 'falsism', since it was either true or false according to the circumstances.[1] The differential effects on mortality of a *series* of bad harvests as against a particular year of dearth were fully acknowledged, and in times of extreme distress the classical economists displayed a surprising readiness to waive their usual objections to State aid for the needy. On the whole they regarded stable or slowly rising real wages as the optimum state of affairs, arguing that the equilibrium level should be high enough to provide an incentive to effort and to enable the labourer to accumulate a reserve for unforeseen contingencies.[2]

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[1] De Quincey, *Logic of Political Economy*, p. 153.

[2] For example, Torrens, *The Budget*, pp. 183–4.

[3] McCulloch even suggested that the workers' taste for gin and tobacco helped to elevate their conception of an appropriate standard of living, and that without it their wages would fall. *Treatise on Wages*, pp. 40–41.

[4] See W. D. Grampp, 'Malthus on Money Wages and Welfare', *American Economic Review*, XLVI (1956), pp. 924–36; and Eversley, *op. cit.*, p. 211, for interesting comments on this matter.

Although their theoretical reasoning was based on the assumption that factors of production were highly mobile and that wage differentials in any given place or occupation would be speedily eliminated by the process of competition, unless checked by monopolistic action or legal restraint, the classical economists frequently discussed wage differentials between occupations, places, skills, and sexes. McCulloch claimed that 'the difference of a half or more, between the price of labour, etc. in the remote counties, and London and its vicinity' which had been noted by Adam Smith, had largely disappeared by 1820; but Senior regarded ignorance and inertia as significant obstacles to mobility, and asserted that between town and country, and between different regions, the differences 'in occupations, in wages, in habits, in wants, and in morals' were as great as between Paris and Berlin—a view that was fully echoed in McCulloch's writings.[3] More interesting, perhaps, was their disagreement about occupational mobility within the more advanced sectors of the economy. According to McCulloch,

> a person who has been trained to habits of industry and application, can easily be moved from one employment to another. The various subordinate branches of all the great departments of industry have so many things in common, that an individual who has attained to

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[1] Senior, 'The Budget of 1842', *Edin. Rev.*, CLI (1842), p. 197. Cf. Grampp, *op. cit.*, *passim.*

[2] Although Ricardo disapproved of the Gloucestershire practice of maintaining wage rates in periods of slack business (*Ricardo's Works*, VIII, p. 316), several of the classical economists supported State aid or intervention in times of acute distress to protect the labourer from a fall in his customary living standards.

[3] McCulloch, *Essay on Reducing the Interest*, pp. 9–10; Senior, 'Poor Law Reform', p. 40; also *Three Lectures on the Rate of Wages*, p. 14.

> any considerable proficiency in one, has seldom much difficulty in attaining to a like proficiency in any other;

whereas Senior held that

> British workmen, and more especially the most numerous classes, those employed in manufactures, resemble the component parts of the vast machine which they direct. Separately taken, they are as useless as a single wheel or a single roller. Combined with many hundreds or many thousands of others, each helpless when alone, a hundred families can produce results which could not have been obtained by the individual labour of a thousand.

Consequently, once the motive power animating this great machine ceased, the component parts lost their value—'the engine becomes old iron, the spinners and weavers become paupers'.[1]

The workers' readiness to emigrate, given unfavourable conditions at home and a modest subsidy or other inducement to move, was the subject of extensive debate,[2] while the differential between the real incomes of single and married labourers was repeatedly referred to in discussions of the poor relief system. Ricardo, who assumed that the average current wage rate was too low to enable the married labourer to pay taxes without public assistance, denied that the single man enjoyed a surplus that encouraged him to live in an extravagant manner. According to Torrens, the unmarried labourer in an old and settled country had sufficient income 'to purchase the finer manufactured goods, and the articles of convenience and luxury, which have fallen in value as compared with the necessaries of life'; but added that a large family 'deprives the working man of the ease, the comfort, and independence which he enjoys in the single state'—and consequently the marriage rate tended to fall as a country approached the limit of its resources.[3] In general, however, the earnings of women and children were believed to encourage improvident marriages and large families. Married women were described as good earners but bad mothers, and childrens' employment was said to undercut the wages of adults, preventing them from obtaining education, and even diminishing the parents' industriousness.[1] But it was appreciated that the opportunities for family earnings were by no means uniform.

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[1] McCulloch, 'Effects of Machinery on Accumulation', p. 115; Senior, 'Grounds and Objects of the Budget', pp. 504–5.

[2] Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (1965), Ch. 5.

[3] *Ricardo's Works*, VIII, pp. 117–18, 124. Torrens, *On Wages and Combination*, pp. 29–30. The implication of this remark for the Malthusian view need not be stressed.

> The earnings of the wife and child of many a Manchester weaver or spinner exceed, or equal, those of himself. Those of the wife and children of an agricultural labourer, or of a carpenter, or coalheaver, are generally unimportant—while the husbands, in each case, receive 15 shillings a week, the weekly income of the one family may be 40 shillings, and that of the other only 17s or 18s.[2]

As might be expected from their insistence on the need to provide incentives to effort there were occasional references to the desirability of piece-rate payments, a system which, McCulloch claimed, had been 'generally adopted' in Great Britain wherever practicable, because it

> gives the workmen an interest in being industrious; and makes them exert themselves to execute the greatest quantity of work in the least space of time. And in consequence of its prevalence, this practice materially influences even the day labourers; who, to avoid invidious comparisons, make exertions unknown in other countries.

The introduction of piece-rate payments in agriculture, he remarked a few years earlier, had emancipated the agricultural labourers from their former dependence on the farmer under the traditional hiring system.[3]

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Both conceptually and chronologically, the classical economists represent an intermediate stage between the eighteenth-century belief in the harmony of interests and the Marxian idea of class conflict, and they left it to others to draw socialistic conclusions from Ricardo's doctrine, because they broadly accepted the social system of their day, and were under the influence of inherited ideas of economic and social progress. During the early years of the century, it is true, the omnipresent fear of rising population darkened future prospects; but as time passed the once inexorable Malthusian 'law' was translated into a 'tendency' that was being counteracted by the advance of wealth, prudence, and civilization. The strain of optimism was never unqualified, for it was still true at the mid-century that the Malthusian doctrine conflicted with 'those plans of easy beneficence which accord so well with the inclination of man, but so ill with the arrangements of nature'.[1] Pouring cold water on revolutionary or utopian proposals for reform was part of the classical economists' essential function as social scientists, and whenever they argued that the removal of long-established evils could not be accomplished without considerable suffering, their warnings stemmed from realism rather than from hard-heartedness. Senior may have been tragically wrong when he maintained that 'what are called severity and hardness in the administration of relief are by far the best things for the welfare of the labouring classes';[2] but, like his eighteenth-century predecessors, he was anxious to discourage misplaced sentimentalism and ill-judged philanthropy which had long bedevilled the efforts of Poor Law reformers. As it transpired, for all their shortcomings, Senior and his ardent Benthamite collaborator Edwin Chadwick helped to lay the foundations of an administrative revolution which provided an essential starting-point for subsequent social services;[3] and although the classical economists undoubtedly carried their belief in uniformity and system too far, historians have generally undervalued this aspect of their influence while exaggerating the rigidity with which they adhered to their fundamental economic principles.

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[1] McCulloch, *Treatises and Essays on Money, Exchange, Interest, etc.* (1859), pp. 457–8; *Treatise on Wages*, p. 96; 'Taxation and the Corn Laws', *Edin. Rev.*, LXV (1820), p. 169; Malthus, 'Godwin on Malthus', p. 373.

[2] Senior, *Outline of Political Economy*, p. 148.

[3] McCulloch, *Statistical Account*, I, p. 619; *Observations on the State of the Country*, p. 9.

As the preceding pages have shown, the classical principles were capable of considerable modification and adaptation to changing circumstances—so much so, indeed, that the presentation of a brief summary of classical opinion on any important question is a hazardous undertaking. The influence of popularizers like Jane Marcet, Harriet Martineau, and James Wilson of the London *Economist*,[4] who drew their authority from Ricardo and his followers, was so pervasive that it has taken a generation of scholarship to dispel the widespread view that the classical economists were dogmatic proponents of *laissez-faire*. They were, of course, generally sceptical of the value of State interference—albeit with substantial justification, considering the governmental and financial facts of contemporary life—and their influence was, in a number of specific instances, distinctly obstructive. But no serious historian will nowadays argue that either they or their ideas presented 'a solid obstacle to all plans of social reform',[1] for they were themselves essentially reformers of a piecemeal and moderate type, and were increasingly prepared to grant exceptions to the principle of non-intervention in response to the changing facts of economic and social life.

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[1] J. S. Mill, 'The Claims of Labour', pp. 501–2.

[2] Senior, *House of Lords Select Committee on the Burdens Affecting Real Property* (1846), p. 470. There is an almost exact parallel between the economists' desire to protect the pecuniary capital of the rich and their concern for the 'intellectual and moral capital' of the poor. In this respect they anticipate recent interest in the role of 'human capital' in economic development.

[3] See, for example, S. E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (1952), *passim*; and Marian Bowley, *Nassau Senior and Classical Economics* (1937), Part II.

[4] See especially, Blaug, *Ricardian Economics*, ch. VII; and Scott Gordon, 'The London *Economist* and the High Tide of Laissez Faire', *Journal of Political Economy*, LXIII (1955), pp. 461–88.

As far as the labourer was concerned, they firmly believed that his lot could and should be improved; and when Torrens claimed that political economy merited

> the peculiar attention of the benevolent and good, mainly because it explains the causes which depress and elevate wages, and thereby points out the means by which we may mitigate the distress, and improve the condition of the great majority of mankind,[2]

he was merely stating in unusually naïve terms a belief that was generally accepted by members of his group.

By themselves, good intentions count for little, and the classical economists' belief in the natural operation of economic forces and their insistence on the values of individual freedom and the rights of private property undoubtedly prevented them from seriously considering some feasible proposals for reform. No twentieth-century student of industrialization will argue that they possessed either an adequate knowledge of the facts or a sufficient understanding of the labourer's needs and desires. All too often their analysis was influenced by their middle-class preconceptions and prejudices, while their policy proposals as often reflected their aspirations as the practical possibilities of reform. But if their attitude to the lower orders was deficient in subtlety and sensitivity, it was neither hostile nor unsympathetic. They did not fully appreciate the richness and variety of the individuals and groups that comprised the labouring classes; but neither did they homogenize the masses into a conceptual monolith—'the working class', as some overenthusiastic labour historians are inclined to do. They certainly failed to enter into the minds of the unskilled and casual labourers, who formed a large proportion of the wage-earning population, or, at least in the short run, to win the intellectual support of a majority of workers.[1]

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[1] J. L. and Barbara Hammond, *The Town Labourer, 1760–1832* (1925), p. 196.

[2] Torrens, *On Wages and Combination*, pp. 1–2.

Nevertheless, for the most part, they endeavoured to enlist the workers as accessories to reform.[2] Taking nineteenth-century British history as a whole, the classical economists were not far wrong when they assumed that the labouring classes would readily seize any opportunities to adopt middle-class attitudes, standards, and patterns of behaviour.

A Note on Sources

For the purposes of this essay, 'classical economics' means the economic writings, speeches, official evidence, and correspondence of A. Smith, J. Bentham, T. R. Malthus, D. Ricardo, J. Mill, R. Torrens, E. West, T. de Quincey, J. R. McCulloch, N. W. Senior, and J. S. Mill. The article deals only with the period 1800–48, because Smith's ideas are well known (see, for example, my articles in the *Economic History Review*, 2nd ser., XI, 1958–9, and XIII, 1960–1, and *Renaissance and Modern Studies* (Nottingham, 1962) and because there are few comments on the labourer in *Bentham's Economic Writings* (ed. W. Stark, 1952–4). J. S. Mill's views changed so significantly after 1848, and in ways so intimately bound up with his opinions on non-economic issues, that they merit separate treatment. There is indeed some justice in Marx's jibe that he was 'perfectly at home in the domain of flat contradiction'.

Attention has been concentrated on published material, but this represents a large portion of the total extant, and within the selected period the coverage has been wide, though incomplete. For authorship of the numerous unsigned reviews see F. W. Fetter's articles in the *Journal of Political Economy*, 1953, 1958, and 1962; and the *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 1960. Dr. Donald Winch generously lent me, in advance of publication, his edition of *James Mill, Selected Economic Writings* (1966), and I am also grateful for comments on an earlier draft by Mr. M. Caplan, Dr. D. P. O'Brien and Professor S. Pollard.

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[1] Cf. R. K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader, 1790–1848* (1955), pp. 97 ff.

[2] Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 139, with special reference to Francis Place.

Roy A. Church and S. D. Chapman

6 Gravener Henson and the Making of the English Working Class[1]

In his recent monumental study *The Making of the English Working Class*, Mr. E. P. Thompson has stated that in the history of working-class movements between 1780 and 1832 three men were outstanding—John Doherty, John Gast, and Gravener Henson.[2] Our knowledge of all three is small and Gravener Henson, in particular, has remained something of an enigma. The primary aim of this essay is to throw more light on the life and thought of this energetic Midland labour leader whose activities and opinions prompt two important questions of a general nature. The first concerns the character and significance of Luddism in the Midlands, which Thompson has seen as a symptom of the crucial transition in these years to a *lassez-faire* system of political economy.[3] The second issue arises out of his contention that during the fifty years before 1832 complex—and in some sense catastrophic—social, economic, and political changes led to the emergence of a working class conscious of a fundamental identity of interests as against the interests of other classes.[4] Since Thompson insists that class as a relationship must always be embodied in real people and a real context,[5] it will be instructive to examine Henson's ideas in connexion with Thompson's discussion

[1] The authors wish to acknowledge with thanks the assistance of Mr. Malcolm Thomis, who provided a number of valuable references.

[2] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), p. 774 (subsequently referred to as *Thompson*).

[3] *Ibid.* Thompson's treatment of Luddism has drawn high praise, even from two of his most stringent critics. See R. Currie and R. M. Hartwell, 'The Making of the English Working Class?' *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., VXIII, 1965, p. 643.

[4] *Thompson, op. cit.*, p. 11.

[5] *Thompson, op. cit.*, p. 9.

of working-class attitudes, to place Henson in the context of the industrial society that he knew, and to assess on a limited scale the validity of the thesis which seeks to locate the formation of a conscious working class during Henson's lifetime.

I

Throughout that lifetime (1785–1852) the staple industries of Nottingham and the surrounding villages were the manufacture of hosiery and lace. In terms of the mode of industrial organization, the rate of technical progress, and the condition of the labouring population, the industries provided striking contrasts. The hosiery industry was organized on the basis of outwork until after the middle of the nineteenth century, while lace was being produced in factories as early as 1816; the technology of hosiery manufacture remained virtually unaltered for two centuries, whereas the rapidity of technical obsolescence was a major feature of the history of lace manufacture for several decades after 1780.[1] These factors help to explain the contrasting experience of framework knitters and lace makers during this period. Framework knitters and their families suffered the penalties of belonging to a stagnant industry which required mostly semi-skilled labour; lace makers, a predominantly skilled section of the population, earned correspondingly higher rewards, though the trade was subject to fluctuations in output and employment which enabled entrepreneurs to make—and lose—considerable fortunes with extraordinary rapidity. It is true that in both industries after the great lace boom of 1825 money wages followed a downward trend for a quarter of a century, but the differential between the earnings of lace workers and framework knitters remained. In several respects, therefore, the history of the two industries epitomized the contrasts of the industrial revolution.[2] Henson both saw and experienced the gains and losses of rapid economic change.

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[1] For contemporary accounts of the hosiery and lace industries see Gravener Henson, *History of the Framework Knitters*, I (1831), subsequently referred to as *Henson*; William Felkin, *History of the Machine Wrought Hosiery and Lace Manufactures* (1867), subsequently referred to as *Felkin*. See also J. D. Chambers, *Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century* (1932); F. A. Wells, *The British Hosiery Trade* (1935).

[2] See Roy Church, *Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town 1815–1900: Victorian Nottingham* (1966), ch. I–IV.

Henson was born in Nottingham in 1785, and after receiving a scanty education he was apprenticed to the stocking frame. In about 1802 or 1803, when he became a journeyman, he moved into the point-net (lace) branch of the trade, the only branch of the silk and cotton hosiery trade to prosper during the war years.[1] By the Peace of 1802 there were already nearly 1,200 frames making silk point net,[2] and it was a dispute in that branch which in 1809 caused the workmen to approach Henson to act on their behalf. Later he remarked, 'They compelled me to act, in a good natured way . . . they stopped my machine!'[3] Which of his mature qualities Henson then showed is partly a matter for speculation. William Felkin (1795–1874), Evangelical Whig and manufacturer who was also the local author of *A History of the Machine Wrought Lace and Hosiery Manufacture*, noted that during his life Henson had studied hard in his leisure hours,[4] and his later writings suggest that he was acquainted with works written by the political economists, and by Owen, St. Simon, Cobbett, and Carlyle.[5] He also read the Bible, but the sole clue to Henson's religious sympathies is contained in one brief paragraph in his *History of the Framework Knitters* in which the Wesleyan sect alone receives credit. It is this acknowledgement which might suggest that he was educated at one of the town's Wesleyan Sunday schools, the main avenue to literacy for the labouring population.[6] Certainly a literate spokesman was a valuable asset to any working-class movement. Moreover, Henson was a 'very clever mechanic',[7] forthright in argument—Felkin, who was not unsympathetic, later referred to his 'dogmatism and warm temperament'[1]—while in 1816 a London magistrate found Henson to be a 'sensible fellow and very fond of talking'.[2] Whatever his qualities at the age of 24, they were sufficient to commend him to the fellow workmen of 1809 who chose him as their spokesman.

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[1] *Felkin*, p. xvi–xviii; *D.N.B.*, Gravener Henson; W. H. Wylie, *Old and New Nottingham* (1853), pp. 233–4; *Report of the Select Committee on the Emigration of Artisans and the Exportation of Machinery* (1824), VII, p. 274; John Blackner, *History of Nottingham* (1816), p. 234.

[2] *Nottingham Review*, 3 June 1831. Article by 'A Nottingham Artisan', which, judging from the style, was almost certainly written by Henson.

[3] *Report of the Select Committee on Postage* (1837–8), XX (ii), p. 211. The dispute in fact began in 1809.

[4] *Felkin*, pp. xvi–xvii.

[5] *Nottingham Journal*, 20 Feb., 6 Mar., 24 Apr., 21 Aug. 1835: anonymous articles attributable to Henson.

[6] *Henson*, pp. 246–53; S. D. Chapman, 'The Evangelical Revival and Education in Nottingham', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, LXVI (1962). The organization of the Wesleyan Church may have inspired Henson's organization of the Union of Framework Knitters in 1812; certainly it was agreed in Nottingham that 'The Constitution of this Club is founded upon the Methodist System of Wesley'. *P.R.O.*, H.O. 42/138, quoted by J. L. and B. Hammond, *The Skilled Labourer* (2nd ed., 1919), p. 230.

[7] *Report of the Royal Commission to inquire into the Condition of Framework Knitters* (1845), XV, p. 23. Henson made two improvements to point net.

The dispute into which he was drawn began when one of the principal manufacturers of point net rejected the workmen's plan for the adoption of a standard of measurement. Other manufacturers, who accepted that the use of an agreed standard as the basis for payment would improve the conduct of trade, subsequently announced that unless the dissenting manufacturer could be persuaded to comply with the agreement wage rates would be reduced. The men struck in 1810, but the occurrence of the Napoleonic blockade, marked by the Orders in Council in the same year, damaged the export trade and forced the workmen to concede the reductions. After the strike collapsed, several men were prosecuted and imprisoned for a month under the Combination Laws.[3] It is probable that Henson was one of those sent to jail—certainly his associates were temporarily deprived of their freedom; and thus during his first experience of trade disputes Henson witnessed the partiality of the law. His subsequent efforts to achieve for framework knitters and lace makers a stronger bargaining position are to be seen in two major prosecutions of employers (in 1811 and again in 1816), the formation of a new union (the Union Society of Framework Knitters, reformed in 1813 as the Society of Mechanics), and the campaign in Westminster for a Bill to prevent frauds and abuses in the hosiery manufacture. After 1817 the pace of his activities slackened, but his most visionary project was yet to come, for in 1823 he made a second attempt to persuade Parliament to protect and regulate the hosiery and lace industries. The failure of this effort seems to have marked a turning-point in the development of Henson's ideas as reflected in his subsequent activities.

The major rift between the knitters and hosiers opened in 1811: in conditions of depressed trade resulting from the war and fashion changes the hosiers' association gave notice that unless the stockingers compelled manufacturers of the low-quality, low-priced, 'cut-up' hosiery to pay the standard rate of wages as formerly agreed, rates would be reduced.[1] Henson was a member of the knitters' committee who requested a meeting with the hosiers to discuss the ultimatum, but without success. Later he described how he instigated proceedings against four hosiers whose names had been appended to the notice of wage cuts. His attempt to secure their conviction on a charge of illegal combination failed, for the magistrates finally refused to issue a warrant, because, they argued, Henson had been unable to prove in which parish the hosiers' combination had met.[2] Meanwhile, gangs of framework knitters known as Luddites implemented a policy of militant industrial action.

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[1] *Felkin, loc. cit.*

[2] H.O. 42/163, quoted Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 241.

[3] J. Blackner, *op. cit.*, pp. 236–8; *Report of the Select Committee on the Emigration of Artisans and the Exportation of Machinery* (1824), VII, pp. 279–280; *Nottingham Journal*, 7 July 1810.

Thwarted by the magistrates in his efforts to act within the framework of the law, Henson sought to alter the law itself, drawing up a Bill which would outlaw the production of low-quality hosiery and lace, require employers to fix rates of payment for various classes of goods, and render truck payments illegal. However, the 'Bill for Preventing Frauds and Abuses in the Framework Knitting Manufacture and in the Payment of Persons Employed Therein', after being whittled down in the Commons, was finally rejected by the Lords.[3] Meanwhile, against the wishes of the authorities in Nottingham, frame-breaking had become a capital offence.[4] The Bill's failure disturbed Nottingham's parliamentary representatives, who, fearing the possible renewal of violence, requested Henson to use his influence among framework knitters and urge moderation.[5] Even before the Bill was introduced, however, Henson and the knitters had resolved to reorganize, and the same year saw the formation of a society 'for obtaining Parliamentary Relief and for the Encouragement of Mechanics in the Improvement of Mechanism', a federation of societies existing as far away as Godalming and also in Scotland and Ireland, with the central executive committee located in Nottingham.[6] The society, with its houses of call, its central fund for the letting of frames, travel grants for the unemployed, and relief payments to the infirm and aged, seems to have been far removed from the spirit of Luddism and nearer to that which infused the friendly societies of craftsmen which were springing up in these years.

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[1] Hammond, *op. cit.*, pp. 258–9.

[2] *Report of the Select Committee on the Emigration of Artisans and the Exportation of Machinery* (1824), VII, pp. 281–2. The Town Clerk, George Coldham, was secretary to the Hosiers' Association.

[3] Cut-up stockings, consisting of straight pieces of fabric produced on wide frames and sewn together, lacked both shape and durability. Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 229.

[6] Thompson states that the passage of the Bill to make frame-breaking a capital offence caused the framework knitters to organize themselves into a committee for political purposes (p. 535). It should be noted, however, that the decision to organize was taken in 11 February 1812, i.e. before the Bill had been read for the first time. *Framework Knitters*, MSS., 11 February 1812; Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

In 1814 more frames were destroyed in the Nottingham district, and local hosiers opened a subscription to support the activities of a committee established by the hosiers and the Town Clerk for the purpose of suppressing the Luddites. In the summer of 1814 framework knitters belonging to the society were prosecuted under the Combination Act when men in the silk branch struck for an advance. Three men were subsequently convicted of 'receiving money for illegal purposes', and they were sentenced to one month's hard labour (the maximum term was three months). Coldham, Town Clerk and secretary of the committee, thought that this was the first prosecution which had taken place in Nottingham under the Combination Act;[1] in fact, it was the first since the lace trade dispute of 1810, although during the intervening years workmen's combinations had continued to exist. It seems likely that the authorities—and the hosiers—linked Luddism with the workmen's combinations, but although some of the magistrates were also manufacturers, any attempt to explain their suppression of what appeared to be organizations posing a threat to public order must take into account their responsibilities in a period of war.

Following the prosecutions of 1814 the Framework Knitters' Society collapsed,[2] and with the breakdown of the vehicle for Henson's peaceful policy, extremists once more assumed the initiative. Undaunted, Henson in 1816 launched a private counter-attack and successfully instituted proceedings against two truck-paying hosiers.[3] The recurrence of frame-breaking in the same year saw several thousands of pounds' worth of damage inflicted upon lace manufacturers, but this proved to be the final Luddite episode, followed as it was by the hanging of six young men and youths and the transportation of three more in 1817. Although the hostility of the authorities towards workmen's combinations and the refusal of the hosiers to negotiate with these bodies may explain the Luddite policy of 'sabotage and direct action', it is difficult to concur with the claim that it was effective in improving the workmen's position.[1] According to Felkin, at that time a youth employed in the trade, while frames were being smashed some hosiers raised wages by up to 25 per cent, but as soon as the machine-breakers laid aside their hammers the hosiers reimposed wage reductions.[2] The frames which were destroyed were those that belonged to hosiers who paid lower rates and produced cut-ups, but in fact, framework knitters working these frames were able to earn more than many men making fashioned, high-quality stockings.[3] Even had the Luddites succeeded in forcing cut-ups from the market, it is unlikely that the demand for fashioned hosiery would have grown sufficiently to generate a level of employment necessary to absorb the growing number of framework knitters. At a time when the fashion trend encouraged the wearing of trousers neither Luddism nor trade-union pressure could be expected to advance the workers' long-run interests while entry to the trade remained unrestricted.[4]

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[1] Hammond, *op. cit.*, pp. 233–4.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 236. The hosiers compelled the workmen to purchase their frames by instalments, instead of receiving wages: *Nottingham Review*, 6, 13 September 1816.

2

There has always been some doubt about the connexion between the constitutional movement for the regulation and protection of the hosiery industry, in which Henson was the moving spirit, and the Luddites. Mr. Thompson favours the view that such a connexion existed. He writes: '. . . in Nottingham there is an interesting oscillation between Luddite and constitutional protest, and it is possible that both were directed—at least up to 1814—by the same trade union organization in which perhaps Luddites and constitutionalists (probably led by Gravener Henson) differed in their counsels'.[5] Later he concludes that Henson shared the Luddites' 'advanced political radicalism', and that 'Luddism commenced . . . in Nottingham as a form of direct trade union enforcement'.[6] Thompson is drawn to this conclusion by two ideas. The first is his belief that 'Luddism gave way to constitutional agitation so suddenly that it is impossible not to believe that the new Committee (of 1812) was not at least partly under former Luddite direction'.[1] The second is the alleged association of Henson and other leaders with Luddism, and in support of this contention he quotes Felkin's suggestion that 'it is not too much to say that there was no trade combination in the three midland counties during the first forty years of the century with which . . . Henson was not acquainted, both as to their leaders and in due time their operations'.[2] Thompson also quotes the Hammonds, Darvall, and Patterson, who recognize that the Luddite gangs won the sympathy of most of the labouring population, while the two latter authors also identify support from 'the committees of some, at least, of the ephemeral and semi-secret trade clubs of the time'.[3] In the absence of definite proof, Thompson considers the circumstantial evidence sufficient for him to conclude that the Luddites were in the mainstream of working-class movements in Nottingham and that Henson and his committee for parliamentary relief were in some way connected with them. The implication is that Henson's organization worked through constitutional channels by day, and by night engaged in industrial sabotage, a view which clearly warrants careful scrutiny.

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[1] E. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Breakers', *Past and Present*, I, i (1952), pp. 59–60.

[2] *Felkin*, pp. 233, 237, 241.

[3] Felkin, 'Some Particulars of the Past and Present State and Extent of the Hosiery Trade', Appendix 3 of *First Report of the Select Committee on the Exportation of Machinery* (1841), (201), VII, pp. 4, 244; Wells, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

[4] *First Report of the Select Committee on the Petitions of Framework Knitters* (1813), (247), II, pp. 16–19; Wells, *op, cit.*, p. 95; J. D. Chambers, 'The Vale of Trent 1670–1800', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, Supp. 3 (1957), p. 60.

[5] *Thompson*, p. 535.

[6] *Ibid.*, pp. 774, 558.

It is true that some of Henson's contemporaries believed that he had secret connexions with the Luddites. Thus in 1814 the Town Clerk wrote to the Home Office: 'I have little doubt that the late breaking of frames were directed by the executive committee of the Union of Mechanics . . .', the 'principal leader' of which was named by another correspondent as Gravener Henson. A county magistrate reported that a hosier whose frames had suffered under the hammers of the Luddites felt convinced that the order for demolishing the frames was issued by Henson.[4] These suspicions appeared to be so well founded that in 1817 Henson was placed under arrest in London while planning an appeal for the condemned machine-wreckers. The London *Courier* recorded that 'this man Henson has long been an object of dread to the well-disposed inhabitants of Nottingham and its neighbourhood, both on account of the leading influence he was thought to have with the Luddites, and his supposed political principles'.[1] In a reply to an inquiry from the Duke of Newcastle, a county magistrate described Henson as one who was 'supposed to have been a most active agent of the Luddites, one of the contrivers of mischief without engaging personally in it . . .'[2] It was this report that led to Henson's imprisonment and interrogation by the Home Secretary. Another London newspaper, the *Observer*, went so far as to identify Henson with the Pentrich insurrection of 1817,[3] while even Francis Place accepted the popular view that Henson was 'King Ludd'.[4]

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 556.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 496. Note, however, the passage in its entirety in *Felkin*, p. 240: 'It is not too much to say that there was no trade combination in the three Midland counties during the first forty years of this century with which—though he might not, *and in this instance did not, take part*—Henson was not acquainted both as to their leaders and designs, and in due time their operations.' Here Felkin is referring to the Luddites. (Our italics.)

[3] Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 264; F. O. Darvall, *Public Disturbances in Regency England* (1934), pp. 183–91; A. T. Patterson, *op. cit.*, pp. 105–6.

[4] Quoted in Aspinall, *Early English Trade Unions* (1949), pp. 170–3.

How seriously should we treat these reports? If we are to believe the statement of the two London magistrates who were posted in Nottingham in 1812, neither the town nor county magistrates of Nottingham were in touch with the situation. 'Nothing', they reported, 'could be weaker or founded on less grounds than their ideas.'[5] The mere existence of such a 'daring conspiracy' as the Union of Framework Knitters was enough to 'impress terror on the minds of the manufacturers', a fear which was doubtless linked with Luddism.[6] It is unlikely that Felkin, subsequently a hosier and lace manufacturer, was unrepresentative of many of his fellow employers when he wrote that while Henson was the pivot of local working-class movements there was no evidence to prove that he was in any way connected with the Luddites.[7] The Tory *Nottingham Journal* recorded that its editor was ignorant of Henson's possible association with Luddism, and the editor of the Radical *Nottingham Review* insisted that 'we never before heard it even insinuated that the Luddites had any political objects in view—the direct reverse of this was always understood and believed in this neighbourhood'.[8]

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[1] Quoted *Nottingham Journal*, 19 Apr. 1817.

[2] Newcastle MSS. 4,978, Sherbrooke to Duke of Newcastle, 18.2.1817 (Nottingham University Archives).

[3] Quoted *Nottingham Review*, 23 Jan. 1818.

[4] Place MSS. *B.M.* Add. MSS. 27,809 (1876).

[5] Reports from Messrs. Conant and Baker, N.P.L.; cf. Patterson, *op. cit.*, p. 106. Significantly, the writers of these remarks, Coldham, Rev. J. T. Becher, and the Hon. L. Rolleston, had no experience of the hosiery industry.

[6] Rev. J. T. Becher quoted in Aspinall, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

[7] *Felkin*, pp. xvi–xvii, 240.

[8] *Nottingham Journal*, 19 Apr. 1817; *Nottingham Review*, 23 Jan. 1818. The editor of the *Nottingham Review* until the end of 1816 was John Blackner, *infra*.

Henson's attitude to Luddism can be readily appreciated by examining his public and private statements on the subject. It is difficult to believe that he could have succeeded in completely concealing his private opinions, since his papers were twice confiscated—by the Nottingham Corporation in 1814 and by the Home Office in 1817.[1] Those papers reveal only antipathy towards the Luddites. Thus when a Leicester lady confused the constitutional movement with the guerrilla campaigns in 1812, he wrote to her at length that in his view the threat to her family was 'a glaring outrage on humanity and social order', while the Bill he was pressing Parliament to adopt was 'calculated to restore the distracted peace of the three (hosiery-manufacturing) counties'![2] Elsewhere, Henson later maintained that he had urged the Luddites to 'form clubs and combinations' as an 'alternative means of obtaining their ends'.[3] He also claimed that his own life had been threatened repeatedly by some of the more desperate Luddites 'for counteracting their designs, and for the freedom of language I have used at various times against their practices'.[4]

The true basis for the division between constitutionalism and Luddism is seen in the economic division of the hosiery-manufacturing districts, the social and political significance of which has been overlooked hitherto. The constitutionalists were based in Nottingham and (to a lesser extent) in Leicester, where the finer and better-paid branches of the hosiery manufacture were carried on. The corporations of both towns, though of differing political complexions, cultivated the favour of the burgesses, a large proportion of whom were framework knitters.[5] Perhaps because of this political strength many of the gentlemen hosiers who lived in Nottingham were liberal in outlook, a fact which was reflected in the political life of the town.[6] Nottingham knitters, moreover, possessed a tradition of constitutional initiative and negotiation which began in 1778, when the framework knitters had succeeded in electing their own representative to the House of Commons.[1] As an analysis of the Nottingham Poll Books helps to indicate, the permanent divisions in local society, if such existed, were between nonconformity and the Established Church, and between Tories, Whigs and Radicals.[2] During these years magistrates had shown a willingness to listen to and sometimes support the case of the workmen against their employers; and when in 1812 the framework knitters applied to Parliament for a regulation of the trade, they received the approval of most of the hosiers, who, like Henson and his knitters, appear to have believed that they were acting in the interests of the *whole* trade.[3]

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[1] This confiscated material includes the minutes of the first central conference of the Society of Mechanics in 1813. H.O. 42/139, quoted in Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

[2] Quoted in *Nottingham Borough Records*, VIII, pp. 149–50.

[3] *Report of the Select Committee on the Emigration of Artisans and the Export of Machinery* (1824), VII, ev. of Henson, p. 282.

[4] Henson to Sidmouth, H.O. 42/166, quoted by Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

[5] See the Nottingham Poll Books at the University Library in Nottingham.

[6] From *c.* 1689 to 1832 the majority of the Corporation were members of High Pavement Presbyterian (Unitarian) Chapel. The minister during the last quarter of the eighteenth century was Rev. George Walker, F.R.S., who shared Priestley's liberal views. Walker's radical politics prevailed in the corporate leadership until after the Reform Act.

The Luddites were based in the country districts, in the industrial villages of Arnold, Basford, Bulwell, Sutton-in-Ashfield, and Ilkeston, where the common and lower-paid branches of the manufacture were carried on. In these villages, moreover, owing partly to the exactions of the bag hosiers whose powers there were greatest, the knitters lived under conditions which were markedly inferior to those in the towns.[4] Exploited by the bag hosiers (the small price-cutting manufacturers) and subservient to the squirearchy, the framework knitters from the villages

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[1] *Henson*, pp. 384–94; only one instance of machine breaking is recorded: *Nottingham Journal*, 31 July 1778.

[2] The voting of three occupational groups between 1796 and 1812 was as follows:

1796	*Whigs*	*Tories*
Framework knitters	333	467
Hosiers	19	32
Lace manufacturers	0	2
1803		
Framework knitters	615	454
Hosiers	67	58
Lace manufacturers	10	5
1806		
Framework knitters	717	587
Hosiers	64	87
Lace manufacturers	10	5
1812		
Framework knitters	695	393
Hosiers	51	48
Lace manufacturers	20	8

[3] Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 258; Blackner, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–8; Framework Knitters' MSS. (N.P.L.), 3984/92, 108, 125, 150, 153.

[4] Wage appeals of village framework knitters in *Nottingham Journal*, e.g. pp. 7, 28, Aug. 1790 (Ilkeston, Sutton), 28 June 1794, 4 July 1795 (Arnold, Calverton), 25 July 1795 (Sutton); Blackner, *op. cit.*, p. 385. Those divisions persisted. See Roy Church, *Economic and Social Change in a Midland Town 1815–1900: Victorian Nottingham* (1966), ch. I and II; for a description of one of these hosiery manufacturing villages (Ilkeston) *c.* 1800, see Felkin MSS., Memoir of William Felkin III (1795–1874).

were blamed by Henson for the knitters' riots that occurred in Nottingham in 1779, when according to Henson 'the rude and enraged country people . . . came into the town in large numbers' to precipitate disturbances.[1] The account in the *Nottingham Journal* of the riots which took place in 1790 suggests that the country workers were once more expressing their discontent,[2] and it was this volatile section of the population in the hosiery districts, some of whom considered their interests to be neglected by the knitters of the town committee, that increased Henson's difficulties in conducting the affairs of his organization.[3] An illuminating comment was made by a manager of a worsted mill at Arnold in 1808 when he noted that the local people were 'more earnest after news than any I know of. They are either mad with joy, or half-dead with disappointment'.[4] John Blackner, another prominent member of local working-class movements, himself a migrant from the manufacturing village of Ilkeston in Derbyshire, recorded that the Luddite movement began with a meeting of the country knitters in Nottingham Market Place, and that these people were responsible for machine-wrecking in the area.[5] All of the men convicted of this offence hailed from the villages, as did Jeremiah Brandreth, leader of the Pentrich uprising of 1817. In Nottingham itself few frames were broken.[6] In view of this evidence it seems that a more plausible interpretation of the significance of the oscillation between constitutionalism and violence is that the country knitters took to smashing frames when the established leadership, which was in the hands of Henson and his associates in the town, either failed or was discredited.[7]

Such an interpretation, especially with respect to Henson's rôle, receives further support from what little we have been able to discover of Henson's political activities. There are few reliable reports of his political utterances, but he is known to have spoken at 'respectable' public meetings in 1813 and again in 1817, when the Mayor presided. Henson's presence and the tenor of his speeches on these occasions, when he criticized the Government for continuing the war with France and attacked aristocratic manipulation of membership of the House of Commons, identified him with the Radical leaders of the town.[1] Such a situation is not surprising in view of the town's political history. In the closing years of the eighteenth century Nottingham's ruling oligarchy became fiercely radical and its members made every endeavour to recruit popular support for its democratic reform programme.[2] In fact the Corporation succeeded in retaining the political allegiance of a majority of the working classes until the seductive oratory of Feargus O'Connor exploited local hostility against the new Poor Law.[3] Henson's trade-union colleague, John Blackner, editor of the *Nottingham Review* from 1809 to 1816, could command a considerable following among the radicals of the town; an unstinting admirer described him as 'more than a match for half the great school-made men in the kingdom',[4] and while Luddism was condemned in the columns of the *Review*, Charles Sutton, its outspoken proprietor, showed himself to be sympathetic to radical movements.[5] The important point is that within the locality of Nottingham and district there was no need for Henson and his circle to resort to mask-and-hammer politics; within the limits possible when a country is at war, the views of the working classes, like those of other sections of the community, could find outlets for expression, and through the correspondence columns of the newspapers their grievances and aspirations were subjects for public debate.

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[1] *Henson*, p. 405.

[2] *Nottingham Journal*, 30 Oct. 1790. The destruction of property and rioting that occurred in 1831 when the Reform Bill was rejected was also associated with an influx of villagers into Nottingham.

[3] Framework Knitters' MSS. (N.P.L.), 3984/82, 98, 99.

[4] J. Wellersley at Davison and Hawksley's Arnold Works, 8 Sept. 1808, N.P.L., MS. 1,884.

[5] Blackner, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

[6] Hammond, *op. cit.*, pp. 262, 265, 269–70, 358.

[7] Cf. Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

Furthermore, an examination of the correspondence of Henson's Committee on industrial matters suggests that we can pursue this line of argument further. The letters show that the Committee were counting on support from all parts of the hosiery manufacturing districts of the Midlands. This naïve confidence proved to be misplaced, and indeed in view of the history of labour relations in the area between 1790 and 1811 it is difficult to understand how the Committee made such an error of judgement. From the 1790s the various branches of the hosiery industry had taken to negotiating separate wages claims with the hosiers.[6] In the common, or plain, branch the initiative was invariably taken by country knitters at Basford, Arnold, Ilkeston, or Sutton, the largest of the country manufacturing villages. Not surprisingly, these villages were unresponsive to the efforts of the Nottingham Committee in 1811. A delegate from Basford wrote to the Committee explaining the feeling in his village that the interests of the plain branch were being neglected. He complained that the London delegates were 'lace and plain silk hands'. However, while the village knitters were uncooperative, considerable support was forthcoming from hosiers.[1] The conclusion seems inescapable that the division between the constitutionalists and Luddites reflected the differences within a trade in which the interests of artisans were sometimes closer to those of the merchant hosiers than to those of the semi-skilled workmen in the country districts.

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[1] *Nottingham Review*, 1 Jan. 1813, 14 Feb. 1817.

[2] S. D. Chapman, *Life of William Felkin, 1795–1874* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Nottingham, 1960), ch. III.

[3] Church, *op. cit.*, ch. VI

[4] T. Bailey, *Annals of Nottinghamshire*, IV (1851). J. C. Warren, 'John Blackner', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, XXX (1927); *Nottingham Review*, 1 May 1829.

[5] Derek Fraser, 'The Nottingham Press', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, LXVII (1963).

[6] *Nottingham Journal*, 7, 28 Aug. 1790; 28 June, 23 Aug. 1794; 4, 5 July 1795; 1 June 1799, etc.

The question remains as to the ultimate aim of the Midland Luddites. Was their purpose, as Thompson maintains, to demonstrate opposition to 'the imposition of the political economy of *laissez-faire* upon and against the will and conscience of the working people'? Or was it, as it has been argued elsewhere, merely the most militant form of industrial action which minority groups, seeing no alternative means of redress, resolved to pursue?[2] There can be no doubt that the Luddites were selective in their destructive forays; they struck only at wide frames making cut-ups, and at frames which belonged to hosiers and masters who paid framework knitters less than statement price as formerly agreed upon by employers and workmen. In 1814 a letter, signed by 'Edwin Lud', which appeared in the *Nottingham Review*, ended: '. . . in the presence of the Almighty God we three times wished Hell might be our external Damnation if we did not . . . if we are not raised eight pence next Friday'.[3] According to Henson, the Luddites broke the frames 'merely because it was the only means that presented itself, as they conceived, [to escape] from the còmbinations of their masters'.[4] It would seem, therefore, that the actions of the Luddites were calculated only to achieve limited industrial gains.

Thompson admits that, compared with the Luddites of the North, Country Luddism in the Midlands was more confined to industrial objectives. Nevertheless, he stresses that whereas an 'otiose "economist" explanation' which seeks to relate Luddism with bad trading conditions at the end of the wars illuminates the occasion for Luddism, it does not explain its character. For the significant feature of Luddism, in Thompson's view, is its occurrence 'at the crisis point in the abrogation of paternalist legislation and in the imposition of political economy of *laissez-faire* upon and against the will and conscience of the working people . . . Luddism can be seen as a violent eruption of feeling against unrestrained industrial capitalism'.[1] This interpretation presupposes that important changes in the manner in which the hosiery trade was conducted must have occurred during the years immediately preceding the Luddite outbreaks. But the work of Professor Chambers has shown that those stockingers who owned their own frames had become a minority even before the final quarter of the eighteenth century, while the apprenticeship system had likewise broken down some eighty years before this time; the inability of the Company of Framework Knitters to enforce its regulations on the hosiers and stockingers of the Midlands was one of the factors which had encouraged the growth of framework knitting in that area during the early years of the eighteenth century.[2] The wage agreements of the 1770s and 1780s were negotiated by workmen's combinations and associations of employers, and lacked the sanction of outside authorities. Certainly the failure of hosiers and knitters, and lace manufacturers and lace makers, to renegotiate wage agreeements may warrant a condemnation of hosiers for refusing to meet the framework knitters, and may justify criticism of the lace manufacturers for placing the onus of securing the agreement of all manufacturers upon the shoulders of the workmen's organization. However, this failure does not reflect a recent change from an industrial system based on mutuality and paternalism to one in which competition and *laissez-faire* dominated economic affairs: such a transformation had long since taken place in the textile trades of the East Midlands.

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[1] N.P.L. 3984/92, 98, 99, 108, 125, 150, 153.

[2] Thompson, p. 543; see Hammond *op. cit.*, ch. VIII and IX. E. Hobsbawm, 'The Machine Wreckers', *Past and Present*, I (1952).

[3] *Nottingham Review*, 2 Apr. 1814.

[4] *Report of the Select Committee on the Emigration of Artisans and the Exportation of Machinery* (1824), VII, evidence of Henson quoted in Hammond, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

3

We must therefore reject Thompson's interpretation of the significance of Luddism in the Midlands. Nevertheless, if we can assume that Henson's ideas on *laissez-faire* were not of recent origin in 1823, then it seems likely that his actions of earlier years were inspired by precisely those motives which Thompson has attributed to the machine-wreckers. Throughout his life Henson continued to attack the *laissez-faire* system of political economy, looking back to an age early in the eighteenth century when, as it seemed to him, a regulated trade had prevented many of the evils which were evident in the industrial society in which he lived. Before embarking on a detailed examination of Henson's ideas, however, it is relevant to examine a number of factors which influenced his life and thought after about 1812, the year in which his attempt to secure Parliament's protection for the framework knitters ended in failure.

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[1] *Thompson*, pp. 543, 547.

[2] For developments in the hosiery industry in Nottinghamshire see J. D. Chambers, *Nottinghamshire in the Eighteenth Century* (1932), ch. V.

The condition of framework knitters did not improve with the termination of war with France, and even the boom of the early twenties brought only small and temporary economic gains. Gradually the framework knitters became a class clearly distinguishable from all other sections of the working classes; their economic, social, and physical inferiority was generally acknowledged by men from all classes. Thoroughly depressed and demoralized, the framework knitters failed to recover a standard of life which, until the early years of the war, had stood at a tolerable level. This failure was due to the factors already referred to—the free entry into the industry of large numbers of semi-skilled labourers, the increasing production of the labour-saving cut-up hosiery, and the alteration in fashion which adversely affected the pattern of demand for hosiery. The plight of the framework knitters appeared especially deplorable because of the contrast contemporaries could make between them and the Nottingham lace makers.[1]

The perfection of the bobbin net lace machine in 1809 initiated an era of rapid growth and expanding opportunities for framesmiths and the more highly skilled framework knitters. During the following two decades large numbers of artisans were able to acquire their own net machines; some 1,200 had done so by 1829.[2] By that date the more efficient machines required mechanical power, and before long the owner of small means was encouraged by the opportunity of stall-holding in steam-powered factories.[3] Though Thompson, among others, has noticed the introduction of machine lace, he appears to have overlooked the social and economic significance of the selective migration of talent from the hosiery industry into the new machine-made lace manufacture.

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[1] Church, *op. cit.*, ch. II.

[2] *Felkin*, p. 339; *Nottingham Review*, 11 Sept. 1829.

[3] D. E. Varley, *A History of the Midland Counties Lace Manufacturers' Federation* (1959), p. 48.

Henson's skill as a mechanic enabled him to share the prosperity in the halcyon days of the rise of the lace industry.[1] He became a master point-net maker at a fairly early stage in his career, possibly in about 1812, and he made two important improvements in technique, one of them the introduction of a fabric called 'point-net damasked net'.[2] At one period he was employing eleven journeymen,[3] but when the point-net trade collapsed as a result of French competition Henson was ruined, and in 1818 he spent a period in St. Mary's Workhouse.[4] Nevertheless, shortly afterwards he was able to become a bobbin-net maker. Henson's experience as an independent master appears to have broadened his political outlook, and an article which he wrote some twelve years after his spell as point-net manufacturer is indicative of his new horizons. Now he acknowledged that the demand for net, and hence the prosperity of those who made it, depended on the competitiveness, of the industry in international markets and on the vagaries of fashion.[5] His sympathy for the aspirations of the working classes and his concern for the improvement of their condition remained strong, but henceforward Henson played a much more detached rôle in the affairs of the working classes. Thus in 1824 he acted as adviser to the Committee on Artisans and Machinery, and told of his work as an intermediary between masters and men,[6] how on one occasion he persuaded the masters to forgo the prosecution of a workman, how on another his advice and assistance were requested by leaders of the framework knitters who were prosecuted under the Combination Laws. Henson was able, so he claimed, to detect a flaw in the case against the men, a technicality on which the verdict was quashed. Elsewhere, however, he confessed that the working classes were apathetic to his argument in support of legislation to prevent the emigration of men and machinery.[7]

In pursuing his other major aim, the provision of what he deemed to be an equitable legal framework as the basis for improved industrial relations, he certainly encountered apathy and indifference among the local working classes. Few signed the parliamentary petition requesting the legalization of trade unions and the establishment of machinery for the settlement of industrial disputes.[1] In Parliament, Henson's Bill drew determined resistance from the philosophic radicals, who had been primarily responsible for the defeat of the Bill of 1812; for while Hume and Place pressed merely for the removal of the Combination Laws as a main obstacle against the free operation of the economic laws of supply and demand, Henson sought to obtain positive legal protection for the workmen. Had he been content with a limited measure, his Bill might have succeeded; instead he prepared a comprehensive measure of reform, a charter of rights which was designed to safeguard workmen against sudden and capricious dismissal, secure written legal contracts relating to wages, hours, and work agreed to, and establish arbitration machinery for the settlement of disputes.[2] It is important to note that Henson's Bill was not simply a matter of industrial regulation; it was inspired by an economic philosophy rooted in a morality that eschewed the *laissez-faire* tenets of the philosophic radicals. He abhorred the 'sauve qui peut and the devil take the hindmost' attitude.[3] 'Our object', he said, referring to the Bill, 'was not to attack any man or body of men, but to attack principles which we conceived to be wrong in governing society'.[4] But Henson and Peter Moore, the radical Member for Coventry who agreed to introduce the Bill, were outmanoeuvred. Place's scheme for a straight repeal of the Combination Laws was successful, and Henson's ideas had to wait far beyond his own lifetime for their fulfilment.

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[1] The rise of the machine-made lace industry is treated in Church, op. cit., ch. III and IV.

[2] *Henson, op. cit.*

[3] *Report of the Select Committee on Postage, 1837–8*, XX, ev. of Henson, p. 213.

[4] *Nottingham Review*, 3 June 1831, article by 'A Nottingham Artisan'; *Nottingham Borough Records*, VIII, p. 273. His imprisonment during the suspension of *Habeas Corpus* is an alternative explanation, but one report says that he was only in jail seven weeks. *Nottingham Review*, 23 January 1818.

[5] *Nottingham Review, loc. cit.*

[6] *Report of the Select Committee on the Emigration of Artisans and the Exportation of Machinery* (1824), VII, ev. of Henson, p. 281.

[7] Henson to Place, 24 Apr. 1825. Place MSS., 27803/374. 'The people of Nottingham seem to view the exportation of machinery and the re-enactment of Combination Laws with apathy and indifference . . .'

4

The repeal of the Combination Acts brought about an immediate change in the environment of trade-union leaders. 'A very intelligent and respectable manufacturer from Nottingham', wrote Place, 'assured me that so rapid has been the improvement amongst the working people since the passing of Mr. Hume's Act has enabled them to meet together without apprehension of persecution, that they can hardly be said to be the same people'.[1] The correspondent to whom Place referred was almost certainly Henson, whose letters reveal a cordial relationship between the two men at this time.[2] The significance of this observation is that it suggests that while Henson had already begun to recognize that he might best be able to further the interests of the working classes otherwise than by active participation in trade-union affairs, the altered situation following the legalization of combinations quite possibly reinforced his changing conception of his role in society.

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[1] *Loc. cit; Nottingham Review*, 13 June 1823.

[2] The proposals are set out in detail in a pamphlet by G. Henson and G. White, *A Few Remarks on the State of the Laws at present in Existence for Regulating Masters and Workpeople* (1823). See also Henson's Bill and Place's comments in Place MSS., 27,800/6.

[3] G. Henson and G. White, *A few Remarks etc.*, pp. 139–40.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

Thus after 1821, the year in which he had assisted in organizing a strike of the Midland Framework Knitters, Henson involved himself in activities of a different kind, although his ultimate aims would appear to have remained unaltered. 'When I was young', he related in 1837, 'I was engaged in many extensive turnouts, but since that period I have always acted upon the policy of endeavouring to bring the parties together.'[3] He remarked that for several years he had regularly met the manufacturers and that he had acted on behalf of both masters and men. These meetings were doubtless in connexion with the framework knitters' attempts to persuade the hosiers to adhere to the wages statement; indeed, Henson argued that ignorance of wage rates paid in the villages was the chief obstacle to successful negotiation and agreement. The circulation of information as to wages paid in the locality (and, indeed, in foreign countries) and the prices of articles in foreign markets would, he thought, give to the manufacturers and to other workmen an accurate picture of their competitive position *vis-à-vis* other manufacturers. Henson maintained that such information would eliminate jealousies and suspicions that existed between manufacturer and workman: 'I have always been of the opinion that notwithstanding we have had had a great many disputes and many riots in our district, there is not a better set of masters in the world, to take them as a body'.[4]

He concluded that lack of accurate information tended to impair industrial relations. If the framework knitters could disprove the hosiers' contention that foreign producers enjoyed the advantages of lower wage costs and were underselling English manufacturers in overseas markets as a result, the framework knitters' case for higher wages would be strengthened. It was for the purpose of presenting an objective assessment of the competitive position of the hosiery industry and an investigation of comparative wage costs that in 1837 Henson was in communication with Genoa. Should the hosiers' assertion be substantiated by a demonstration that in the interests of the trade English hosiers could not afford to pay more, then the journeyman, said Henson, would be perfectly content and would set himself immediately to invent machinery and entirely to supersede foreign labour.[1] By middle age Henson appears to have repudiated forceful industrial action, and in 1837 he commented: 'I consider that if the masters and men can be brought together there will be very little combination; it is only when they have been kept asunder that they have disagreed'.[2]

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[1] Place MSS. 27,798/51, 20 June 1825.

[2] See especially the letters of 24 Apr. 1825 and 31 May 1825. Place MSS. 27,803/374; 27,807.

[3] *Report of the Select Committee on Postage* (1837–8), XX, ev. of Henson, p. 221.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

One wonders, however, whether the framework knitters would have accepted with equanimity the implications for wage agreements of an 'objective' report of unfavourable economic conditions. On his own admission, Henson's views on the emigration of men and machinery were out of tune with those of the majority of the working classes, while there is also reason to believe that he received little support for his early efforts to improve wages through combination. When in 1848 the framework knitters began to revive trade clubs he reflected that had they exercised a similar devotion in earlier years then the men might have prevented some of the suffering of previous decades.[3]

By this date, however, Henson was no longer the outstanding trade-union leader he had been during the first two decades of the century. When Muggeridge visited the Midlands as one of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of framework knitters in 1845, Henson was not consulted. 'We are not aware of the nature of the evidence taken by Mr. Muggeridge', Henson observed, 'but from the persons examined we are apprehensive that it is deficient as to what decided improvements and new manufactures might be introduced to this business',[4] an oblique reference to his own efforts to stimulate technical progress in the town's staple industries. One major reason why

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 221.

[3] *Nottingham Journal*, 25 Aug. 1848. Between 1834 and 1848 a series of articles on the staple trades of Nottingham were printed in this newspaper. The articles are unsigned, but we have Henson's statement in 1837 that he was contributing such articles to the *Journal*. The style and the content of most of these trade commentaries provide the justification for attributing them to Henson.

[4] *Nottingham Journal*, 14 Mar. 1845.

Henson was no longer the pivot of the hosiery unions was his growing involvement in matters affecting the lace trade, which after the introduction of the bobbin-net machine in 1809 had become an industry completely separate from the hosiery manufacture. In 1814 he had belonged to a lace-trade committee set up to prevent the export of machinery, and later he established a committee of journeymen bobbin-net makers whose purposes were to collect weekly sums for relief of the unemployed and represent the interests of the men.[1] As the lace boom ended in 1825 Henson and the other journeymen resolved to co-operate with producers in stinting output, but when in the following year some of the manufacturers proposed to require journeymen to pay machine rent and other minor expenses, Henson led the men's resistance.[2]

To the instability of trade was added the growing competition which Nottingham bobbin-net makers were now meeting, and after 1824 Henson devoted his efforts to the stimulation of local industry and trade. In 1825 he attempted to enlist the support of Francis Place for a campaign to reform the Patent Laws, whose effect, Henson contended, was to discriminate against the inventor-mechanic of small financial means and to inhibit technical progress.[3] As chairman of the Nottingham Society of Inventors and as the author of regular articles in a local newspaper between 1834 and 1850 on the trade and its technology,[4] Henson pursued two major themes: one was the need for experiment and investment in new methods of making lace and hosiery; the other was the importance of producing novel fabrics and articles which would find favour with the public. 'The people of England,' he wrote, 'though the most interested of any nation on earth, have paid the least attention to this important subject, and her nobility have left this mighty engine of fashion entirely at the disposal of the *petit maitres* of Paris'.[5] He urged journeymen to induce the nobility, gentry, and other public figures to encourage fashions which would benefit Nottingham trades; 'every operative', he declared, 'ought to make up his mind resolutely to endeavour to oblige his master to the utmost of his ability and energy in making any new article'.[1] Provided appropriate adjustments were made to wage rates, Henson continued, the interest of the workman lay in forwarding the views of his master in promoting new fashions and new methods, for he stressed that such innovations might well have the tendency to increase the demand for labour. He advocated experiments with the production of articles customarily produced on the looms of North Country weavers. Henson argued with enthusiasm that if these fabrics could be manufactured on the bobbinnet machine (which could operate at twice the speed of the average loom) the future for Nottingham workmen and manufacturers alike promised tremendous economic gains.[2]

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[1] *Report of the Select Committee on the Emigration of Artisans and the Exportation of Machinery* (1824), VII, ev. of Henson, pp. 274–7. *Nottingham Review*, 14 Oct. 1825.

[2] See Church, *op. cit.*, ch. IV.

[3] Place MSS. 27,807/602.

[4] In 1837 he remarked that no important inventions had been adopted in the hosiery industry since the beginning of the century, 'though I have published a list of ninety-five that might come into operation if encouragement were given'. *Report of the Select Committee on Postage*, (1837–8), XX, ev. of Henson, pp. 219, 213.

[5] *Henson*, p. 323.

In addition to his repeated exhortations to all members of the trade to experiment with new techniques (he expressed considerable interest in the application of the Jacquard principle to the Leavers lace machine) and search for fresh designs, Henson sought to counter competition from the Continent through the prevention of exports of machinery and by a reversal of the free-trade policy with respect to lace. His personal campaign against the 'cruel system' of free trade mounted during the 1830s, when he developed his views at length in a series of articles written for the Tory *Nottingham Journal*. The essence of his tirade against the 'Westminster clique' (the free traders) was that they had become 'citizens of the world, to benefit foreign artisans at the expense of their suffering countrymen . . . with the design of taming the English workmen, by bringing them to the Continental level in wages . . .'[3]

During the depression in 1833 a number of leading men in the trade agreed that one of the contributory factors was the growing French competition, depending largely on English machinery for its success. A meeting of the trade was called in Nottingham and a Committee was appointed to agitate for a more rigid enforcement of the law prohibiting the export of lace machinery. The chairman of the Committee was William Felkin, who shared Henson's anxiety for the standard of living of the working classes.[1] For a time Henson, who acted as assistant secretary and principal spokesman, worked in close liaison with Felkin, and their committee enjoyed a wide measure of support from other lace manufacturers.[2] When mediation by one of Nottingham's Members of Parliament failed to halt the flow of lace machines to the Continent, the Committee determined to place its case directly before the Board of Trade. The members decided to employ Henson's unrivalled knowledge to draw up a memorial to the Board on the whole subject of the export of machinery.[3] The pressure of the Nottingham Committee gave rise to an important prosecution following Henson's discovery of net machines for export at the London docks. As the proof of intention to export lay with the informer, the indefatigable Henson seized the machinery to prevent the removal of evidence by the London merchant exporter. Henson may have been encouraged to proceed against the exporter by the permanent secretaries at the Board of Trade, which twice had refused to grant export licences. He found himself abandoned, however, both by the secretaries and by the rest of the Nottingham Committee, whose funds were exhausted before the action brought against Henson for the illegal seizure of property was instituted. With characteristic determination and fortitude, he conducted his own defence; the majority of the Committee had little faith (as one of its members later confessed) in the outcome, and Henson was left alone to face the eventual defeat of his campaign to counter overseas competition with Nottingham industries.[4]

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[1] *Nottingham Journal*, 18 Jan. 1839.

[2] *Nottingham Journal*, Mar. 1835; 26 Jan. 1836. 'Several of the hosiers now complain that workmen prevent improvements and framework knitters will not change their ways. Hosiers are accused by framework knitters of refusing to pay adequate price for such alterations and additions. If the hosiers' denial is true, then framework knitters are the most stupid animals in existence; it shows an absurd feeling on the part of the operative, that it cannot be credited that they are averse to improve their manufactures and to accommodate fashion in all her vagaries provided they be reasonably recompensed. Had their forefathers refused to alter fashions it would never have been a trade an apprentice could learn.' *Nottingham Journal*, 18 Jan. 1839.

[3] *Henson*, pp. 148–9; *Nottingham Review*, 3 June 1831 (article by 'A Nottingham Artisan'), *Nottingham Journal*, 24 Dec. 1834 *et seq*. The articles are anonymous, but the literary style leaves no doubt of the identity of the author; almost identical opinions—and similar invective—are to be found in his *History*.

The French protectionist policy was likewise the object of his repeated attacks, but he acknowledged that the success of French producers could not be attributed to protection alone. By the thirties Frenchmen had become familiar with the construction and maintenance of lace machinery and no longer relied upon the skills of English immigrants. The French were ahead in their designs, and in 1839 Henson expressed his regret that Nottingham lacked a school of design comparable with that which existed in many a French town. He also praised the French Chambers of Commerce and the success of the Conseils de Prud'hommes which dealt with the settlement of disputes arising out of business contracts.[1] Indeed, it was with the intention of establishing similar institutions that in 1838 Henson led the formation of a Nottingham Artisans' Chamber of Commerce.[2] He tried to persuade the manufacturers to establish a parallel body which, in co-operation with the Artisans' Chamber, would help to promote the mutual interests of all people connected with the town's staple industries. Henson advocated an alliance of 'good' employers with 'good' workmen in formulating and implementing trade policies calculated to withstand foreign competition.[3] When the Artisans' Chamber first met it consisted of ninety-four members and included master framework knitters, independent lace makers, and journeymen from both trades. The functions listed in the rules of the Chamber bore Henson's unmistakable stamp: it was to handle inventions, communicate with official bodies, consider technical education, enforce commercial law, and diffuse information. However, two months after its first meeting, when the Chamber committee reported its findings as to the causes of the current depression, the supporters of the newly emerging Chartist movement stole its thunder, persuading the assembly that the absence of political representation was the primary cause of distress.[4]

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[1] See S. D. Chapman, *The Life of William Felkin, 1795–1874* (unpublished M.A. thesis, Nottingham, 1960).

[2] *Nottingham Journal*, 9 Aug. 1833. The names of the members of the Committee are recorded in their correspondence in *P.R.O.*, B.T.I. *Nottingham Journal*, 18 Oct., 8 Nov. 1833; *P.R.O.*, B.T. 299/1737, 10 Feb. 1834; *Felkin*, p. 353.

[3] *P.R.O.*, B.T.I. 397/2,602, 7 Nov. 1834.

[4] R. V. Faber, reported in *Nottingham Journal*, 21 Feb. 1834. *Felkin*, p. 16., *P.R.O.* B.T.I. 287/514, 24 July 1832, and 532, 2 Aug. 1832; B.T. 5/42.2149.

Henson remained aloof from the Chartists, mainly it seems because he distrusted the motives and ability of the leaders whom he contemptuously described as 'disinterested lecturers and spouters'![5] He nevertheless shared with many of the supporters of the Chartists an abhorrence of the New Poor Law: 'The Poor Law is', he wrote, 'or ought to be considered as a national benefit club, yet by the degrading "Test System" all are regarded as spongers and impostors'.[6] He attacked a system which failed to make a distinction between the different needs of the poor: 'Instead of instilling noble and independent principles among the really needy who can prove they are unwillingly unemployed, they are treated as vagrants. . . .' Commenting on the proposed National Holiday strike of 1842, Henson pointed out that the leaders had omitted to take measures for the maintenance of the poor men whom they wished 'to make . . . their dupes to elevate them into power, which it is now evident they only meant to acquire . . . for their own benefit'.[1] He accused the Chartist leaders of recklessness, arguing that one result of the national strike would be to overwhelm the working classes in misery. ' "The Charter, The Charter" they cry, but they do not describe what laws and regulations we are to have from the Charter'.[2]

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[1] *Report of the Select Committee on Postage* (1837–8), XX, ev. of Henson, p. 219. William Felkin was another enthusiastic advocate of the establishment of equitable tribunals based on the Conseils de Prud'hommes.

[2] *Nottingham Journal*, 27 Apr. 1838.

[3] *Nottingham Journal*, 6 Apr. 1838; *Report of the Select Committee on Postage*, p. 221.

[4] *Nottingham Review*, 22 June 1838; for an account of Chartism in Nottingham see Church, *op. cit.*, ch. VI.

[5] *Nottingham Journal*, 2 Sept. 1842.

[6] *Nottingham Journal*, 25 Nov. 1842.

Meanwhile, Henson continued to advocate measures which would increase productivity and raise the level of employment. He approved the framework knitters' attempts in 1843 to obtain a Government inquiry into the condition of framework knitters, applauding both their method for securing a redress of their grievances and subsequently their request that the Government should legislate to require hosiers to issue tickets bearing a clear statement of rates of payment.[3] The failure to draft an effective Bill and the resulting evasion of the Ticket Act of 1845 led Henson to conclude: 'The stockingers as a body have been misled by men who studied more their own vanity than the comfort of suffering men for whom they acted'.[4] The schedules of wage rates which had been used as a basis for the Bill had been drawn up at Leicester and were largely inapplicable to the Nottingham trade, a point that Henson had foreseen and on which he had commented in the *Nottingham Journal*. 'The stockingers of this district', he wrote, 'should have enquired how their managers have neglected this matter'.[5] In 1846 Leicester framework knitters were defeated in a trial over the legality of frame rent. 'This and their bungling Act of Parliament [the Ticket Act] fully demonstrates they are totally incompetent to take the lead in trade union affairs', said Henson in blunt and characteristic manner, 'and this was our opinion from the first'.[6]

Henson, who in White's trade directory for 1844 appears as 'writer', and a few years later as 'accountant', died in humble circumstances in 1852. A lifetime of endeavour in the interests of the working classes produced only a series of disappointments. Cobbett had once referred to him as one of those men 'whose offensive conceit, coupled with their vulgar ignorance, are sure to do injury to any cause with which they meddle . . .'[1] So brief and so sour a commentary was unfair to Henson, but perhaps Cobbett's observation[2] helps to explain the failure of some of his causes and his isolation in later years.

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[1] *Nottingham Journal*, 2 Sept. 1842.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] *Nottingham Journal*, 5 May 1843; 8 Aug. 1845.

[4] *Ibid.*, 13 Mar. 1846

[5] *Ibid.*, 5 Sept. 1845.

[6] *Ibid.*, 30 Jan. 1846.

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Since Henson was one of the few articulate men who championed the working classes at this time, it is instructive to examine his ideas in the context of Thompson's contention that the 'working class' shared a common moral objection to the political economy of *laissez-faire*, and that in so objecting members of this class accepted as their frame of reference a 'shadowy image of a benevolent corporate state'.[3] The ideals to which the paternalist codes were supposed to conform, says Thompson, may not have been much more than ideals by the end of the eighteenth century, but nevertheless those ideals possessed 'a powerful reality in the notion of what ought to be'.[4]

So far as his personal views are concerned, Henson exemplifies this thesis. It is difficult to decide how seriously he believed his own account of the *History of Framework Knitters* in which he placed the commencement of '*laissez-faire*' in the fifth decade of the eighteenth century. Before that time, wrote Henson, 'the poor could live, and did live with ease and were not subject to a state of uncertainty for want of employment or apprehension of a reduction of means . . .'[5] One of his principal sources appears to have been the recollections of Caleb Herring, an important figure among the Nottingham framework knitters before Blackner and Henson began to dominate the local scene.[6] When

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[1] Letter to *Nottingham Review*, 1 June 1834.

[2] Note Felkin's comment on Henson. 'His petitions to Parliament, memorials to Ministers and letters to public men were striking, but injudicious, often containing libellous invectives.' *Felkin*, p. xvi.

[3] *Thompson*, p. 543.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 544.

[5] *Henson*, pp. 239, 216.

[6] Caleb Herring (1752–1829). Obituary, *Nottingham Review*, 4 Sept. 1829; *Henson*, pp. 405–16.

Henson did introduce objective evidence he selected that which supported his interpretation or advanced his argument, omitting material that might weaken his case. One example of this was his use of some evidence of 1778 to show that framework knitters were being exploited under the spreading practice of frame renting. He cited the highest frame rents as if they were typical, and neglected to mention that several of the rentiers had risen from the ranks of journeymen framework knitters.[1]

Likewise, Henson's reconstruction and interpretation of history was influenced by his moral objection to the political economy of *laissez-faire*; hence the *History* should be viewed not so much as an academic work but rather as his political testament. In order to highlight the iniquities he believed concomitant with *laissez-faire*, Henson painted an incredibly rosy picture of the lives of the working classes in England before 1753. After that date, according to Henson, as a result of repudiation by the House of Commons of the power of the Framework Knitters Company, the 'system of free trade' and 'free labour' had 'now full scope, unchecked, unrestrained, and unbridled by any other motive other than that of self-interest; the natural consequence was that the rising generation became a complete prey to the capitalists of maturer years'.[2] In 1823, when stating the case for legislative protection for workmen's combinations, he argued that if society were to be ruled entirely on the basis of *laissez-faire* it would produce 'a nation of rogues. Make them selfish—destroy every restriction, set them upon one another, and then see the result: the rising generation will be a far different race of men from their fathers owing to this system having begun its operation amongst us!'[3] Through his regular column in the *Nottingham Journal*, Henson frequently attacked the 'poverty mongers of the political economical school' and its free-trade policies which, he declared, would result in a depression of living standards; like his Continental counterpart, wrote Henson, the English workman would shortly find himself eating 'black bread and soup *maigre* instead of roast beef and plum pudding and good ale'.[4] In the memorial submitted to the Board of Trade in 1833, Henson described the men identified with free trade and *laissez-faire*, 'however talented they may be as theoretical writers or lecturers upon political economy', as 'ill qualified to discourse on machinery of which in many instances, they knew not the name, much less the difficulties of constructing and working it'.[1]

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[1] *Henson*, pp. 385–6 n. 1. Cf. *The Hosiers' and Framework Knitters' Examinations before a Committee of the House of Commons, 1779* (Derby, 1780).

[2] *Henson*, p. 216.

[3] G. Henson and G. White, *A Few Remarks*, etc. (1823), p. 140.

[4] *Nottingham Journal*, 12 Dec. 1834.

Before considering Henson's position in the pattern of social relationships and the nature of his contribution to the making of the working class in Nottingham, it is again relevant to quote Thompson. He has emphasized that class is a relationship 'which must always be embodied in real people and a real context', and his preoccupation with the making of the working class reflects his own conviction that its emergence owed as much to agency as to conditioning.[2] Henson has been described by Thompson as 'one of the three truly impressive trade-union leaders' of this period, who exemplified in his career the struggle of the outworkers.[3] As we have seen, however, although Henson had acted at one time for the framework knitters, as early as 1803 or 1804 he had quit the ranks of the framework-knitting proletariat to become a maker of point net, and so successfully as to set up as a manufacturer employing eleven journeymen. In 1823 we find him now making bobbin net, and in 1837 he described himself as 'engaged principally in the lace trade'.[4]

If, like Thompson, one accepts productive relations as the major determinant of the social relationships which underlie the concept of class and class consciousness,[5] then clearly Henson poses considerable problems. During his early life Henson was surrounded by the values of an artisan class, and it was in an attempt to defend the status and comparative economic superiority possessed by this section of the working population that in the early years of the century he led the campaign for legislation against the unregulated entry of labourers into the trade. But Henson and the framework knitters had no notion of promoting equalization either of wages or of opportunity among the working classes. Though bitterly opposed to *laissez-faire*, he showed himself to be sceptical of the benefits to be achieved either from a general union of the working classes or from extreme radical movements. In the thirties he condemned the general trade unions; he claimed that they tended to infringe upon the liberty of individuals, a criticism which followed his discovery that some members had victimized workmen for declining to join: 'The Trades Unions were considered by some people to be an excellent thing', he later remarked, '. . . I thought it was oppressive'.[1] The Chartists were also the objects of his criticism. Henson argued that Chartism showed no immediate concern for the solution of economic problems, and they had signally failed to propose tangible measures for raising the standard of living of the working classes. He dismissed the movement as visionary and unpractical.[2] In contrast to this were his own modest activities as assistant secretary of the Nottingham Society for the Amelioration of the Working Classes, as scribe for illiterate workmen, and as a source of advice on the law, invention, and all trade matters.[3]

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[1] *P.R.O.*, B.T.I./304/15, 12 June 1834. Henson mentions Place by name; elsewhere he refers to Joseph Hume in similar terms of disparagement.

[2] *Thompson*, pp. 9–12.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 774.

[4] *Report of the Select Committee on Postage* (1837–8), XX, ev. of Henson, p. 208.

[5] *Thompson*, pp. 9–10.

In 1837 Henson declared that one of his principal purposes in life was 'to improve wages, machinery, and everything connected with their benefit'.[4] A change in the distribution of income was only one of the ways in which the improvement of living standards could be achieved, and after the failure of his 1824 bid to secure legislation in favour of trade unions Henson appears to have paid less attention to this line of action. The apathy that he countered during his connexion with the framework knitters' unions, and the apparent futility of employing the strike weapon to advance wages in a stagnant industry, were two other factors which may have helped to influence his actions. Moreover, his own experience as member of an industry which owed its development and success to technical improvement must have impressed upon him the benefits to be obtained from economic progress achieved through ingenuity in technique and in markets. Hence his repeated efforts to encourage enterprise as a means of raising the level of income and employment, a development of course from which working men and women in the local trades, as well as their employers, were likely to benefit more than if income were merely redistributed. This general attitude towards economic progress had its roots in Henson's predisposition to discuss problems in terms of 'the trade' rather than of the workmen as a separate group, though he made it clear that the latter —especially the framework knitters—had greater need to benefit from economic progress, and for this reason he approved of industrial pressure by the unions.

In his book on *The Age of Revolution* Dr. Hobsbawm has written that three possibilities were open to the working classes during the expansion of '*bourgeois* society'—to become *bourgeois* themselves, to acquiesce, or to rebel.[1] Of those who acquiesced little evidence remains, although Dr. Hobsbawm has remarked that 'massive apathy plays a much larger part than is often supposed' in the history of the working classes.[2] However, when some labour historians write of 'the working class', its norms and values, it is the behaviour and attitudes of the non-apathetic section of the working classes[3] which they knowingly or unwittingly attribute to the whole of the working classes: thus 'the working classes' are identified with 'the working class'. It is legitimate to ask whether one is justified in attributing to the apathetic and silent masses those views which only some of the minority are demonstrated to have held, for although it is sometimes assumed that the only genuine working-class activities were socialistic and anti-*bourgeois*,[4] Henson was neither. Dr. Hobsbawm has recently stated that during this period not only was it difficult for the labouring population to become *bourgeois*, but that such an escalation was also 'profoundly distasteful'. He acknowledges, however, that some men did their best to join the middle classes,[5] the implication being that such aspirations ran counter to the norms of the conscious 'working class'.

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[1] *Report of the Select Committee on Postage*, p. 221.

[2] *Nottingham Journal*, 2 Sept. 1842.

[3] *Report of the Select Committee on Postage*, pp. 208, 215.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

We know something about those members of the working classes who rebelled, and something of those who succeeded in becoming in some sense middle class; for the rest, often too much is assumed as to their attitudes and behaviour. Whether those among the working classes who displayed 'massive apathy' were conscious of their class in the sense used by Mr. Thompson is impossible to say, owing to their silent acquiescence in the changes that took place. If these groups are included in Thompson's 'working class', then the implication is that this section of the population held views on *laissez-faire* similar to those expounded by Henson, an assumption which may well prove to be unwarranted.[6] It is also likely that among the working classes there were to be found a number of aspirants who had yet to become (or attempt to become) employers and members of the middle classes—presumably (because it was 'profoundly distasteful') a striving which would merit the description *bourgeois*; while there is also likely to have been a large number of people who held no views at all on the relative merits of socio-economic systems, themselves preoccupied solely with the ordinary business of life. Professor Briggs has argued that the establishment of the word 'class' as a social label reflected a fundamental alteration not only in men's ways of regarding society, but in society itself; as economic and political circumstances changed so did the terminology as well as the character of 'class'.[1] The point made by Professor Briggs refers to temporal changes in the concept of 'class', but for the same reasons the nature of class differed from region to region, as well as altering over time. Finally, it would seem to be important when discussing 'the making of the working class' to acknowledge that the 'working class'—conscious and alienated—in the sense that Thompson and others have used the term, consists of a section of the working classes, and that while we know something of the attitudes, opinions, and activities of their leaders, and can make some inferences about the norms and value systems of their followers, we do not know the magnitude of this section of the population.[2] As for the remainder, less is known about what was typical than is sometimes supposed.

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[1] E. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (1962), p. 200.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 207.

[3] Thompson maintains that, 'as a result of common experiences', the working class 'feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs', *op. cit.*, p. 10.

[4] See, for example, Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, p. 209, and *Thompson*, p. 807.

[5] Hobsbawm, *op. cit.*, pp. 200, 202.

[6] Felkin MSS. Memoir of William Felkin, I (1745–1838). Felkin, a framework knitter of Bramcote (near Nottingham), shunned trade unions, urging 'let each man, by his economy, sobriety and industry so provide, as that it should never be worth his while to accept of unreasonably reduced wages'.

[1] See Asa Briggs, 'The Language of Class in Early Nineteenth Century England', in A. Briggs and J. Saville (eds.), *Essays in Labour History* (1960).

[2] Thompson contends that *between 1780 and 1832* 'most English working people came to feel an identity of interest as between themselves and as against their rulers and employers'. *Thompson*, p. 11.

D. C. Barnett

7 Allotments and the Problem of Rural Poverty, 1780–1840

During the last two decades of the eighteenth century and the first three or four of the nineteenth, opposition to the traditional system of poor relief strengthened considerably. This was one of the consequences of advances in industry and commerce and the growing commercialization of agriculture; a rapidly increasing population, and the pressures and consequences of over twenty years of war; and not least new, and apparently unanswerable, economic doctrines. In the latter part of the eighteenth century it became commonplace to complain that the problem was the cost of the poor rates and the immorality and depravity of the poor. It is perhaps significant that the numerous contemporary commentators on the social scene were convinced that the former was more a threat to society than the latter. There were always those whose primary concern was, implicitly, the protection of vested interests[1] and on the other hand those who felt genuinely that the existing system harmed the poor.

The poor, it was widely believed, were especially susceptible to the poison of rebellion, infidelity, idleness, and immorality. The answer was that social discipline must be firmly established; and it was thought that the system of poor relief was hampering attempts to establish that discipline. Joseph Townsend, expressing openly what others were reluctant more than to imply, summed up this school of thought when he wrote in 1786 that,

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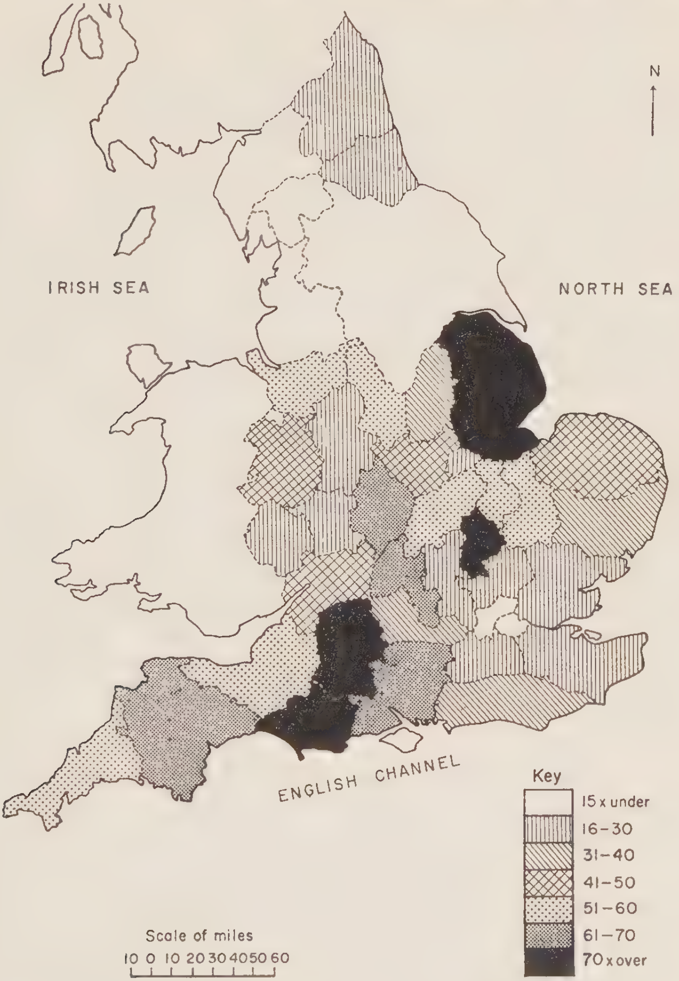
[1] One such statement was that 'the system of taxation under the poor laws makes war upon the independence of that more important division of the community, the middle classes'. J. Sedgewick, *Letter to the Rate-Payers of Great Britain on the Repeal of the Poor Laws* (1833), p. 33.

Hope and fear are the springs of industry . . . our laws weaken the one and destroy the other. For what encouragement have the poor to be industrious and frugal . . . what cause have they to fear, when they are assured, that if by their indolence and extravagance, by their drunkenness and vices, they should be reduced to want, they shall be abundantly supplied, at the expence of others. The poor



Percentage of parishes in each county in which allotment schemes were known in 1833

> know little of the motives which stimulate the higher ranks to action—pride, honour, and ambition. In general it is only hunger which can spur and goad them on to labour; yet our laws have said that they shall never hunger.[1]

The other great complaint concerned the cost of poor relief. The poor rate was much the heaviest of local rates and was levied almost entirely on landed property. The sum spent on the poor rose from under £700,000 in 1750 to a peak of £8 million in 1818. After this it declined slowly until the drastic cuts imposed after 1834 by the Poor Law Amendment Act. It was frequently claimed that the main purposes of any legislation concerning the poor should be the relief of the agricultural interest and an end to this burden on landed property.[2]

Into this widespread feeling of dissatisfaction with both the poor and the provision for their relief the doctrines of Malthus and the evidence of the census injected fresh vigour. The basic Malthusian doctrine, as it became popularly accepted, was that although a compulsory system of relief might relieve individual misfortune, in general it could only spread the evil over a wider surface. The immense sums collected for the poor could do little good, for only a certain quantity of food was available, and that insufficient for the entire population. Therefore, the money collected served only to raise prices. Little of this was very original in this context; the most important contribution, and that most likely to affect the rural poor, was that the poor laws increased population, without increasing the means for its support, by enabling a man to marry and raise a family without being able to support it himself.[3]

I

To contemporaries the problem of the poor was pre-eminently that of the rural poor. Despite the profound changes in the two generations after 1780, England was still throughout the period commonly held to be a mainly rural country in a sense in which it no longer really was. With the gathering momentum of the enclosure movement from the middle of the eighteenth century, the landowners, as was their legal right, were appropriating practically the whole of the common waste for their own private purposes. Between 1760 and 1830 some 3,500

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[1] J. Townsend, *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws* (1786), pp. 9–10.

[2] See Sir F. M. Eden, *State of the Poor* (1797), I, p. 481.

[3] T. R. Malthus, *First Essay on Population* (1798), pp. 74–96.

Enclosure Acts were passed, involving over five million acres, and it seemed to many observers that a change as profound as this rapid commercialization of agriculture must be harmful unless counterbalanced in some measure. To an increasing extent the agricultural labourer was losing direct contact with the soil, and the conditions in which a rural proletariat could grow were continually being thrown into sharp relief, to the distaste of many contemporaries. It was in the appropriation of the common waste that there lay the origins of the plan to insure the labourer against the vagaries of his employment by providing him with a little land. Horror of industrialization resulted in the view that it was to the land that they must look for solutions; although, of course, one predominant reason for the extent of rural poverty in the southern counties was the failure of industry to survive there. This solution was not simply altruistic in intent, it was very much part of the general agitation on the whole issue of the poor laws. Obviously, if the poor could be helped to independence they would not require relief. This was an empirical solution to the problem and one long known in practice in many parts of the country. It was something which worked on a local scale and which many thought worthy of much wider application. It is not remarkable that so many of the advocates of allotment schemes were parochial clergymen and middling country gentlemen; precisely those persons were in the best position to know at first hand the practical needs and problems of the poor.

Certain ideas may be briefly mentioned. Many people thought that the agricultural labourer should possess land, but their schemes did not all share an element of practicability.[1] Even so, idealistic visions of a general redistribution of land and utopian dreams of a return to a simpler peasant economy had their advocates. One such idea was 'home-colonization' of waste land. Given the extent of the waste in England there was some logic in this, although, in fact, the idea was based mostly on Dutch examples.[2]

Another largely impractical idea was that characterized rather late in the nineteenth century by the phrase 'three acres and a cow'. This idea achieved great popularity about the turn of the century, largely through the efforts of Arthur Young and the Board of Agriculture. Such schemes were quite common in Lincolnshire and Rutland, where great landowners like Lord Carrington, the Duke of Ancaster, and the Earl of Winchilsea allowed many of their cottagers two, three, or more acres to keep cows or other livestock and grow vegetables.[1] However, such schemes depended entirely on local circumstances and philanthropy of the highest order by men of exceptional wealth: they could not really be extended generally. Even in Lincolnshire, in forty-eight parishes only some 752 labourers rented land for one or two cows,[2] an average of under sixteen in each parish.

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[1] One delightfully 'visionary' scheme put forward in Nottingham was that the citizens should contribute to a fund to purchase the race-course and turn it into small allotments. This would serve the dual purpose of helping the poor and removing a social evil.

[2] Possibly this sort of idea owed something to the theories of Utopian Communism represented in this period by such men as Robert Owen in Britain, Charles Fourier in France, and Albert Brisbane in the United States. One should also perhaps compare O'Connor's land schemes of the 1840s. It is doubtful if English home-colonizers, any more than men such as those above, really understood the mechanics of social change.

What was needed was something capable of as wide an application as possible. It must be borne in mind that in this field theory built largely upon fact; existing schemes sparked off comprehensive ideas on the subject rather than the other way about. A great difficulty in establishing the extent to which allotment schemes existed in practice lies in the failure of contemporaries to use a common terminology or to define their terms. 'Allotment', 'cottage-garden', 'potato-ground', 'garden-allotment' meant very different things to different observers. The correspondents of the Commissioners in the Rural Districts of 1832–3 used the term 'allotment' to mean anything from four rods (one-fortieth of an acre) at Grendon in Northamptonshire to fifteen acres at Kirkandrews in Cumberland; 'gardens' varied from a few square feet, to two and a half acres at Burscough in Lancashire. In any event, for this essay, an allotment was a piece of land which fulfilled the main condition of being cultivated by the labourer with no other help than his family, and only in his leisure hours. For all practical purposes 'allotment' and 'cottage-garden' were quite interchangeable terms. The only difference was that the latter was attached to the labourer's cottage, whereas the former might be some way off and would be rented separately. One man might well possess both. It was hoped that if the garden ground was inadequate it could be supplemented by a separate allotment.

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[1] A. Young, *A General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln* (1799), p. 410 *et seq.*

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

2

Contemporary evidence of the extent, spread, and features of allotment schemes is quite considerable.[1] It is best illustrated by a regional survey of the country. The practice of making small portions of land available to the rural poor was most common in the southern counties of England, and from these most of the evidence derives. Land was mostly made available by private landlords; parochial authorities were slow to act even after being given legislative encouragement by the Acts passed in 1819, 1831, and 1832 which will be described below. This legislation derived from practical example; thus from as early as 1800 the overseers of the poor at Whelford, Gloucestershire, had successfully hired out fourteen acres as allotments of one-eighth to three-eighths of an acre at annual rents of 3*s.* to 9*s.*

Throughout the period various bodies were formed to encourage landowners to let land and to spread information about the good effects of allotments. Some measure of success was undoubtedly achieved. Of early influence was the *Society for Bettering the Conditions and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor* founded in 1796 by William Wilberforce, the Bishop of Durham, and Sir Thomas Bernard. Twenty years later the *Labourers' Friend Society* was formed, to become the most influential of all such bodies. It had seventeen auxiliary societies throughout the southern counties and one in the Midlands, all of which campaigned vigorously to show 'the utility and national advantage of allotting land for cottage husbandry'.[2]

The most extensive records exist for Essex and Cambridgeshire. In 1807 Arthur Young noted that in Essex both garden ground and allotments, where possessed, were far too small.[3] In the villages of Bulmer, Little Waltham, and Springfield allotments were an eighth of an acre, at rents of 40*s*. to 48*s*. an acre, and at Hatfield Peveril a mere twentieth of an acre (and then given only if the labourer had no garden). Details survive of an interesting scheme operated at Saffron Walden. In 1829 the parochial authorities decided to take advantage of the 1819 Act, one of the few recorded examples. The town had about 4,700 inhabitants and there were eighty-three applications for land. Only seventy-eight could be accommodated, because the Act allowed only twenty acres to be used for the purpose. The allotments were all under a quarter acre, again as laid down by the Act, and varied according to the size of family. The average size of the families involved was six, so over 450 persons benefited. Rents varied from 53*s*. to 68*s*. an acre.[1] Naturally rents varied with the value of the land, though most people would have agreed that there was no point in giving the poor inferior land. The rents were usually those current in the locality, although in some places they were undoubtedly excessive and indeed sometimes gave rise to a local scandal.

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[1] The main sources of information are the evidence appended to the Poor Law Report of 1834 and that given to the House of Lords Poor Law Committee of 1831, the publications of the *Labourers' Friend Society* and the various other similar societies, and the agricultural surveys carried out at the initiative of the Board of Agriculture from 1793 onwards. There are also Arthur Young's *Tours* and numerous pamphlets dealing with particular areas or schemes.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, all references hereunder derive from either the collection of documents published as *The Labourers' Friend: A Selection from the Publications of the Labourers' Friend Society* (1835) or Appendix B, Part II of the 1834 Poor Law Report.

[3] A. Young, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Essex* (1807), pp. 49–50.

A principal argument in favour of allotments for the rural poor was that they would help to reduce the poor rates, and evidence from Cambridgeshire given to the House of Lords Committee on the Poor Laws of 1831 throws some light on this. Of ninety-six parishes where at least some of the poor possessed adequate allotments, in fifty-three the poor rates fell substantially between 1827 and 1831, in fourteen they remained static and in twenty-nine there was a slight rise. Obviously other factors played their part in this, but even as early as 1801 it was noted that in Cambridgeshire 'very few of the poor who occupy a garden of a rood of land received relief from parish rates'.[2] No other comparable statistics are available and these are therefore worthy of some attention. A number of advanced schemes were in operation in the county and in at least eight parishes every poor man held an allotment of a quarter-acre. The amounts of land set aside varied. For twelve of sixteen parishes for which details survive it was under ten acres; but at Bassingbourne, with 1,300 inhabitants, seventy acres were let out by local landowners. At Willingham a scheme started in 1807 allowed 140 labourers a quarter to half acre at a rent of 50*s*. It was never intended that produce should be sold on the open market, but the annual accounts of one Willingham labourer who held a quarter-acre and sold the produce have survived:

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[1] Lord Braybrooke, *Report of the Committee for Ameliorating the Condition of the Poor at Saffron Walden* (1830).

[2] *Annals of Agriculture*, XXXVI, p. 377.

Table 1 Annual Allotment Accounts of a Willingham, Cambs., labourer

Expenses	£	*s.*	*d.*	Profits	£	*s.*	*d.*
Rent		12	6	Bounty		2	6
Seed		10	6	Produce	6	0	0
Digging		10	0	Early potatoes		10	0
Planting		5	0	Cabbages, etc.	1	10	0
Manure		7	0				
Hoeing		5	6				
Digging-out		15	0				
Total	£3	5	6	Total	£8	2	6

A bounty was sometimes paid by the landlord to encourage the best possible use of the land, which in this case was of good quality, if the rent was rather high. None the less it is a reasonable indication of the value of the land to its holder. Even a modest 'profit', about 1*s.* 9*d.* a week in this case, could well make all the difference between independence and dependence on relief.

Sufficient garden ground seems to have been available in many parts of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, though in the latter two counties allotments were uncommon. In Gloucestershire they were well known, and nine schemes started in 1830 provided 550 quarter-acre plots at rents of 20*s.* to 80*s.* an acre.

Wiltshire is of particular interest, because there allotment schemes were more common than in any other part of the country. A valuable survey of twenty-six parishes in the county with allotment schemes was carried out in 1833–4 by the Devizes Branch of the Labourers' Friend Society. Most of these schemes started in 1831 or 1832, although some dated back as far as 1793. These parishes had a population in 1831 of just over 20,000. Some 1,450 cottagers held allotments; the agricultural labouring population was about 2,200, although others than agricultural labourers held land in some places. The allotments varied in size from one-fourtieth of an acre to four acres, but averaged a little under a quarter-acre. Rents varied from a nominal 5*s.* an acre to £7, but were usually 20*s.* to 60*s.* In all cases rents were paid punctually and in most of the parishes it was noted that the poor rates had been substantially relieved. Even where this was not so, these schemes greatly increased the comfort and well-being of the poor.

The pattern was broadly similar in most of the other southern counties. In the Hampshire villages of Worting, Wootton St. Lawrence, and Monk Sherborne the 130 half-acre allotments of 1832 benefited 600 people out of a population of 1,490. The cottagers wanted land so badly that they were prepared to pay rents of £6 an acre for a few square yards of poor soil.[1] At first only seventy-five allotments were let, but so successful was the scheme in its first year that it was quickly extended.[2] In Hampshire, as elsewhere, rates and tithes were paid by the landowner. Had the labourer been liable for them, his allotment might well have been rather a source of greater poverty than an asset.

A typical set of rules were those of a scheme at Cranfield in Bedfordshire, where 126 labourers each rented an eighth of an acre. The rules were:

1. The rent to be paid yearly.
2. No occupier will be suffered to re-let his allotment.
3. No occupier will be allowed to plough his land, but be required to cultivate it solely by spade husbandry.
4. If any occupier be found neglectful in the cultivation of his land, he will not be permitted to hold it after the current year.
5. No occupier who is at work for the parish, or for any employer, will be allowed to work upon his land after six o'clock in the morning, or before six in the evening, without permission from his master.
6. All occupiers will be expected to attend regularly at Divine service, to conduct themselves with propriety at all times; and to bring up their families in a decent and orderly manner.
7. Any occupier who may be convicted of thieving, or of any other offence against the laws of the country, will be deprived of his garden.

Of these regulations numbers three and five are the most important, for they establish the character of such schemes, while numbers six and seven indicate how much it was hoped they might help improve the morals of the poor, as opposed to the degradation thought to result from the working of the Poor Law. It is also interesting to note that the plots of land are referred to interchangeably as both gardens and allotments.

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[1] The report of the Committee on Allotments of 1843 bears eloquent witness to the enormous desire amongst the poor for land. *Report from the Select Committee on Labouring Poor (Allotments of Land)*, 1843, p. iii.

[2] L. B. Wither, *Cottage Allotments in Some Parishes of North Hampshire* (1832).

Evidence for the Midlands and North is much scarcer than for the southern counties. In the Midlands the situation was very similar to the South. In a number of places hand-loom weavers formed and contributed (usually a penny per week) to allotment schemes in order to obtain land.[1] In the North the indications are that the rural poor only rarely possessed land.[2]

Most of the evidence so far presented derives from accounts of individual schemes over the whole period 1780–1840. However, an account of the extent of the provision of land for the rural poor would be incomplete without reference to the extensive evidence collected in 1833 by the Commissioners in the Rural Districts. This enables some analysis to be made of the provision of land over the whole country at one point in time.

This evidence covers the possession of gardens by the rural poor in 909 parishes and the existence or non-existence of allotment schemes in 888 parishes. In the southern counties gardens were possessed by all or most of the poor in 57 per cent of the parishes covered; in 32 per cent some had them, and in only 11 per cent few or none. Provision was most generous in Kent, Gloucestershire, Berkshire, and Wiltshire, and least sufficient in the eastern counties. The picture was similar in the Midlands, with Shropshire and Warwickshire best served. In only a third of the northern parishes did all or most of the poor have gardens. They were most common in Northumberland and Cumberland, but in Yorkshire two-thirds of the parishes had few or no gardens for the poor. The accompanying map gives some indication of the differing extent, by counties, to which allotment schemes were known. They were known in just under half of the southern and Midland parishes, although there is no clue to their actual extent within the parish. They were most common in Wiltshire (where they were known in 82 per cent of the parishes), Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, and Hampshire, and least common in the counties round London. Allotments were known in only 18 per cent of the northern parishes (in Yorkshire 12 per cent).

The exact reasons for differences in the extent of the distribution of allotments between various parts of the country are difficult to isolate, mainly because the evidence is not of a comparable quantity and quality for different counties. The Committee on Allotments spoke of the immense hostility to them in the northern manufacturing counties,[1] which may account for their comparative rarity there. Generally speaking, allotments were most common where rural poverty was most intense. Certainly rural poverty was a long-established and permanent feature of the scene in South-West England and the central southern counties, where allotments were most common (and where the Labourers' Friend Society had most of its active auxiliary branches). Evidence given to the 1843 Committee suggests that in South-East England and East Anglia opposition to allotments by farmers was very widespread, although in the South-East a comparatively high proportion of agricultural labourers possessed adequate garden ground attached to their cottages. In the Midlands allotment schemes were well known from the middle of the eighteenth century, but they tended often to be small schemes operated on the large estates of very wealthy landowners with a tradition of helping their poor cottagers in this way. Before 1830 the extent of allotments seems often to have depended on local tradition amongst landowners. After the early 1830s, when many of the schemes had their origin, their incidence seems very much to have depended on the incidence of rural poverty.

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[1] Evidence to the Committee on Allotments suggests that landlords often disappointed the hopes of these societies by refusing them land: *op. cit.*, p. iv.

[2] However, in Durham the hinds, or regularly employed farm labourers, were automatically given a cottage with a sufficient garden and the means of keeping a cow.

Over the country as a whole allotment schemes were known in about 42 per cent of parishes, though in many of these only one or two labourers would have possessed land. Adequate gardens were possessed by all or most of the poor in just over half the parishes covered, by some in a third and by a few or none in about a sixth. By 1833 the practice of making land available to the rural poor was, therefore, fairly widespread. Enough had been done to provide an extensive practical example, but a great deal more could obviously be done, and this stimulated the efforts of social reformers.

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In a sense this was less a programme of social progress than a backward-looking appeal to a golden age of a landholding peasantry, a fairly typical reaction of a conservative section of rural society in an age of profound social change. As the Rev. David Davies of Barkham, Berkshire, put it, in the past (he wrote in 1795):

> many of the lower sort of people occupied tenements of their own, with parcels of land about them, or they rented such of others . . .

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[1] *Op. cit.*, p. iii.

> this kept numbers from coming to the parish. But since those small parcels of ground have been swallowed up in the contiguous farms and inclosures . . . the families which used to occupy them, being thus reduced to mere hirelings, they are of course very liable to come to want.[1]

It was this apparent reduction of the rural poor to 'hirelings' that gave rise to the protest against the rapid commercialization of agriculture.

As well as relieving the poor, allotments of land would help to render society more stable. Davies pointed out that 'as many individuals as possible in a state should possess an interest in the soil; because this attaches them strongly to the country and its constitution, and makes them zealous and resolute in defending them',[2] a point of some importance thirty years later, during the rural unrest of the early 1830s, when it was claimed that those labourers possessing land either held back or helped put down the riots.

Interest in the soil would also render the poor more independent. This was, perhaps, the most formidable argument in its favour in an age in which the concept of self-help was becoming increasingly pre-eminent. To confer property, it was thought, was to confer independence and self-respect; the greatest possible service to the poor was to teach them to rely on their own exertions. Specifically, it would be an ideal means of preventing time-wasting, attaching a man to home and family, keeping him from the ale-house, teaching him industry and rendering him properly respectful and trustworthy to his betters.[3] It may be noted that rarely did the upper classes trust the poor man's use of his leisure, or indeed trust him in any way at all. The whole approach was summed up in a report to the Taunton Committee of the Labourers' Friend Society:

> The scheme of furnishing a suitable allotment of land to the industrious labourer is a just appeal to the honest feelings of independence, that would disdain any other source of supply than that which arises from self-exertion. It is, therefore, the great actuating principle

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[1] D. Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry* (Bath, 1795), p. 56.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 57–58.

[3] See three very interesting pamphlets in this connexion: Anon, *An Essay on the Practicability of Modifying the Present System of the Poor Laws* (Andover, 1819); J. Bosworth, *Practical Means of Reducing the Poors' Rate* (1824); and Sir J. Sinclair, *On the Means of Improving the Condition of the Industrious Labourer in Husbandry* (1831). Also cf. Mrs. J. Marcet, *Conversations on Political Economy* (1817), p. 178 *et seq.*

> of the Labourers' Friend Society to elicit, by appropriate encouragement, the productive industry of the labourer, to an extent that shall proudly raise him above parochial aid; it is exclusively to cast him on his own manual powers, and to render him altogether superior to charitable assistance. What the Labourers' Friend Society contemplates is in no sense eleemosynary, but intended to promote such permanent habits of lucrative industry as may afford the best security against deficiency and want.

It was certainly believed, with some justification, that the poor man who held land was incomparably better off than the man who did not.

In turning to the plans put forward for actually fulfilling these ideas, the efforts of Arthur Young, unpractical though they often were, are noteworthy for their missionary zeal. In 1799 and 1800, years of harvest failure, he advocated the settlement of a million poor families on waste land, each with one acre. Possession would be guaranteed by Act of Parliament so long as the holder lived free of relief.[1] This had much in common with the home-colonizers of a generation later, but it was meant as an allotment scheme to supplement the income of the poor. However, Young could not even win over the Board of Agriculture. Impressed as they were by the usefulness of land for the rural poor, the landowners were still eminently practical men, looking for realistic short-term remedies.

An early and typical scheme was that suggested by the Rev. J. G. Sherer of Droxford, Hampshire. He proposed that 1 per cent of all land should be set aside for allotments for the rural labourer at a fair rent. This would be done by authority of Parliament in such a way as not to infringe upon ordinary property rights. Individual allotments would not exceed half an acre to avoid distracting the labourer from his normal employment.[2] Several schemes for full-scale State intervention to provide the poor with allotments appeared in the 1820s and 1830s without achieving any real support. Popular also was the plan to assign the poor plots of land as part of all Enclosure Acts.

Much more common than specific or detailed plans was support for allotments in general terms. It was the very large number of pamphlets, periodicals, and articles advancing this general thesis, rather than the more sweeping and largely unpractical proposals, which reflect the main current of popular opinion. Though there was a movement of support throughout the period, out of the many scores of works favouring allotment schemes over one-third appeared between 1830 and 1833. Undoubtedly this reflected a reaction to the rural unrest in these years. Some writers openly avowed this. Most of the publications[1] of this nature also appeared at times of harvest failure or social stress, particularly in the years 1795–6, 1800–1, and 1816–19, as the following table of published pamphlets shows:

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[1] See A. Young, *The Question of Scarcity Plainly Stated and Remedies Considered* (1800), and *An Inquiry into the Propriety of Applying Wastes to the Better Maintenance and Support of the Poor* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1801).

[2] J. G. Sherer, *Remarks Upon the Present State of the Poor* (Southampton, 1796).

Table 2 Pamphlets proposing allotment schemes, published 1795–1835

Period	Pamphlets published	Percentage of total
1795–6	12	6.5
1797–9	2	1.0
1800–1	12	6.5
1802–15	18	9.8
1816–19	40	21.7
1820–9	28	15.2
1830–3	62	33.7
1834–5	10	5.6
	184	100.0

The feature in common of these plans was the size of allotment, about a quarter-acre, and that it should be cultivated by the spade; also, that the possessor should be excluded from relief—that, in fact, the Poor Laws should be in part replaced by an allotments system. A fair rent should be charged, this less in order that the poor should pay an economic rent than that they should not get something at less than its market value, thereby endangering property rights. Not only was this in accordance with the principle of self-help, but it might avoid further alienating the ordinary farmer, who liked allotments little enough as it was.

A weakness of many proposals was that it was not made clear how the labourer would get his land. Some felt that the State would provide it, through the parochial authorities. This was unconvincing, since it was common knowledge that parish authorities were usually reluctant to act, and certainly there were numerous complaints that they took little advantage of the 1819 Act.[1] On a practical level many hoped for no more than an extension of the considerable stream of publicity and propaganda aimed at the landed interest; this was the approach of the Labourers' Friend Society, which for many years sponsored a periodical called the *Labourers' Friend* with no other purpose than to influence the landed interest.

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[1] The incidence of articles on remedies of this sort published in the numerous periodicals of the time shows the same distribution.

If most contemporaries had anything specific in mind it was probably permissive legislation, similar to that already on the Statute Book, but properly and widely put into practice. Such plans were meant to be practical and to combine self-interest on the part of the landowner with the encouragement of self-help. They were meant to be both paternalistic and philanthropic in intent and the effect would be to root the labourer where it was thought he belonged and had his rights—on the land.

Support for allotment schemes did not occur in a vacuum. It was very much part of the great debate on the poor, the poor laws, and what today would be called social welfare. And although the idea had considerable support, it naturally also aroused considerable opposition. This opposition was on two distinct levels, one mainly theoretical and the other resulting more from the workings of self-interest and prejudice. Not unexpectedly, the latter often served to reinforce the former.

The principal theoretical objections to granting land to the rural poor derived from Malthus, although much of his work was very imperfectly understood. His attack was sparked off by Arthur Young's two pamphlets, in particular by his failure, in Malthus's view, to allow for the principle of population (although it is difficult to see why he should have done so).[2] However, in 1807 Malthus rather modified his position. He allowed that it would be wrong to refrain from helping some of the poor merely because they could not all be helped. Further, if the poor laws were abolished, he would support a plan for a limited allotments system to render abolition more palatable. On the other hand, to draw inference from existing schemes was rash; they were on too limited a scale for this, and in any case evidence would be of little validity until several generations had passed.[3] In fact, in allowing that a small plot of land in addition to wages would benefit the poor he was saying no more, nor less, than most supporters of allotments. That some observers could be misled by this discussion is clear. In 1822 Sir George Nicholls, later one of the Poor Law Commissioners, criticized 'the letting out of small quantities of Land to Poor Persons' as leading to excess population, but then went on to say: 'I wish to see every Labourer, and indeed every Person in the lower rank of life where it is possible, provided with a Garden.'[1] Despite the crucial distinction implied here, neither term was defined. Unfortunately Malthus's approach in condemning the wider implication of Young's plan was used to condemn all allotments schemes as such, which Malthus never intended. Interrelated here was the argument that such schemes would reduce the English poor to the level of the Irish peasant, the worst fate contemporaries could easily imagine. This was the crux of the problem, for in Ireland the peasant depended entirely on his plot of land; and though this was specifically not the point of allotment schemes, the fear held the mind of many opponents, despite the fact that it was generally recognized that the English poor were used to too high standards to relapse into Irish habits.[2]

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[1] See, for example, *Quarterly Review*, XLI, July 1829, p. 281, and Lord Suffield, *A Charge Delivered at the Norfolk Quarter Sessions* (1830).

[2] T. R. Malthus, *Second Essay on Population* (7th ed., 1872), pp. 450–1.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 500–2.

Another objection stressed occasionally was the possibility that possession of land would attach the labourer to the soil even where there was no demand for his labour. This was of some relevance because an objective of the Poor Law Commissioners, in particular Chadwick and Senior, was the creation of a mobile labour force.

The only other coherent theoretical criticism of allotments derived from fear of a 'loi-agraire'.[3] This arose particularly in the early 1830s,[4] probably as a result of the rural unrest. It was sometimes asked whether the country was prepared to provide land indefinitely for an endless number of claimants, for this it was said would be to turn over to the poor all property rights, thereby sanctioning an agrarian law.[5] The importance of these views must not be overemphasized, but they probably did help to consolidate the darker forebodings and prejudices of those with little affection for allotment schemes.

The extension of allotments by compulsory legislation was usually hotly opposed by many of those who approved of these plans as such.

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[1] Sir G. Nicholls, *Eight Letters on the Management of our Poor* (Newark, 1822), pp. 33–34.

[2] See, for example, C. Jerram, *Considerations on the Impolicy and Pernicious Tendency of the Poor Laws* (1818).

[3] In 1796 Tom Paine in his *Agrarian Justice* had denounced individual property and proposed that everyone should be enabled to cultivate a little land.

[4] T. P. Macqueen, *The State of the Nation at the Close of 1830* (1831), p. 18.

[5] W. Day, *An Inquiry into the Poor Laws and Surplus Labour* (1833), pp. 33–34.

Thus the opposition to Arthur Young at the Board of Agriculture was led by Lord Carrington, whom Young had praised for his active support for allotments in Lincolnshire. Allotments were seen in the context of philanthropy and self-help, not state action.

The real opposition to allotments came, as one would expect, from self-interest and prejudice against the poor as a class rather than from economic principle. Farmers generally were bitterly opposed to them. They had no good opinion of their labourers, and their most frequent complaint against allotments was that they would render their labourers too independent and comfortable, exactly the point usually argued in their favour. This was really a fear of the labourer's neglecting his ordinary job, and was certainly at the root of the opposition. However, it is most significant that the tenant farmers almost invariably took a very different view from that of their landlords. There may well have been an element of jealousy of status in this, since few tenant farmers seem to have welcomed their labourers equally as holders of land, both of the same landowner and on the same conditions. There was also reluctance to let land for allotments because estate managers and agents preferred to deal with as few tenants as possible.[1]

4

A further stage in this approach to the problem of the rural poor can be seen by turning to its fate in Parliament. Throughout the period members of both Houses showed considerable interest in allotments. Before the turn of the century two unsuccessful Bills were put before the Commons, intended to give the poor allotments. The first, Alexander Popham's Poor Bill of 1790, proposed small allotments of land as one of the means of helping the poor. The second, Sir John Sinclair's General Enclosure Bill of 1796, provided that in any future enclosure cottagers would acquire small plots near their cottages to compensate for any loss of their share of the common waste or open fields.

After the war concern about agricultural distress reached a peak in 1816–17, and the feeling was widespread that the burden of the poor rates was one of the more important causes. The Committee on the Poor Laws of 1817 reported favourably on the idea that parishes should follow the practice of individual landlords in letting allotments to the poor in order to promote independence and fight pauperism.[1] One of the pieces of legislation to result from the Report was Sturges Bourne's Select Vestries Act of 1819.[2] This allowed a parish to obtain up to twenty acres of land to be let at reasonable rents to poor and industrious labourers. Although this was a period of great interest in allotments the Act attracted little notice, indicative perhaps of a lack of enthusiasm for State action, but also of a complete lack of any really practical machinery for its enforcement.

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[1] The whole of the Minutes of Evidence to the 1843 Committee on Allotments provide a fascinating panorama of contemporary views on the provision of land for the rural poor.

Interest in allotments revived at the end of the 1820s, reaching a peak after 1830. In this period three Acts were passed to give land to the rural poor. The last two months of 1830 were the most intense period of agitation, that is immediately after the agricultural riots in the southern counties. At this time allotments were proposed in a number of debates on the poor.[3] In March 1831 the Lords debated a recommendation of their Committee on the Poor Laws that land be given to the poor,[4] and in June Lord Malmesbury suggested an extension of the 1819 Act.[5] On 15th October 1831 a Poor Relief Act was passed which extended the amount of land allowed for allotments by the 1819 Act to fifty acres.[6] Similar provisions were extended to Crown Lands by the Crown Lands Allotment Act[7] passed on 20 October. These Acts were rushed through in the remarkably short time of four and three days respectively, which suggests that the Government had more than half an eye on social unrest. In October 1831, for the second autumn in succession, the country-side seethed with discontent. The agitation, long feared if the Lords rejected the Reform Bill, appeared on 7 October. In general circumstances of unemployment and underemployment in the countryside there was always a prospect of riots over food and wages. Many disturbances in the southern counties in 1831 were an amalgam of rural grievances and politics.[8] Lord Althorp, the Whig Chancellor, introduced the first measure, although, in fact, personally convinced that this sort of thing was much better left to private arrangements.[9]

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[1] *Report from the Select Committee on the Poor Laws* (1817), p. 19.

[2] 59 Geo. III c. 12.

[3] Especially those of 11 Nov. in the Lords, 3rd ser., I, p. 371 *et seq.*, and 19 Nov., *ibid.*, p. 596 *et seq.*, and 17 Dec. in the Commons, *ibid.*, p. 1,316 *et seq.*

[4] 3rd ser., III, p. 10 *et seq.* See the Lords' Report *passim.*

[5] 3rd ser., IV, p. 262.

[6] 1 and 2 Will. IV c. 42.

[7] 1 and 2 Will. IV c. 59.

[8] See J. R. M. Butler, *The Passing of the Great Reform Bill* (1914), p. 279 *et seq.*

[9] 3rd ser., VIII, p. 537.

Outweighing this was the widely held view that where there had been allotments there had been least unrest in 1830, more specifically that individual allotment-holders refrained from joining in the unrest. George Pryme, Member for Cambridge and Professor of Political Economy at the University, argued this strongly before the House in May 1833,[1] and a few months later was reinforced by the published extracts from the information received by the Commissioners investigating the administration and operation of the Poor Laws.[2] All the contemporary comment points in this direction, and as we have seen for the past half-century many advocates of allotments for the rural poor had said just this. Obviously enough, those parishes where a significant proportion of agricultural labourers held land sufficient to fall back on in time of dear food and low wages were least likely to see unrest, although if a whole district became inflamed even those least badly off might well be drawn in. (These were also the circumstances in which, so contemporaries said, individual allotment-holders tried to calm their less-fortunate neighbours.) In June 1832 John Weyland[3] steered through an Act enabling land to be set aside from enclosures for allotments, the Act to be taken together with those of 1831.[4] However, this was the last of such legislation.

The Commons Select Committee on Agriculture of 1833 reported favourably on allotment schemes, and the Poor Law Report of 1834 contained a number of long, detailed and very favourable reports, which were accurately summarized in the introduction to the Report.[5] At least five of the Assistant Commissioners were in favour,[6] but Chadwick and Senior were hostile. Both favoured large-scale, highly capitalized farming, and Chadwick was positively opposed to allotment schemes as such. In a letter written in 1834 he said that 'invariably the labourers who had common allotments were lower in condition than the labourers living in villages who had none'; anything to the contrary was 'a pernicious popular error'.[1] Chadwick's intention was to increase the mobility of rural workers and many of the early Reports of the Poor Law Commissioners reveal the attempts to persuade the rural poor to move to the manufacturing districts. He wanted a free labour market and the elimination of anything coming between the labourer and his wages, hence his opposition to allotments.[2] The Poor Law Report did not reflect Chadwick's views, but it made it quite clear that there would be no action:

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[1] 3rd ser., XVII, p. 1066.

[2] *Extracts from the Information Received by H.M. Commissioners as to the Administration and Operation of the Poor Laws* (1833).

[3] Typically enough, Weyland, Member for Hindon, was a profound Conservative in his views on the poor and Poor Laws. He thought that hardship was the necessary incentive to industry and that too much education for the poor was bad. He firmly believed in allotments as a step towards the moral regeneration of the poor.

[4] 2 & 3 Will. IV c. 42.

[5] *Report from H.M. Commissioners for Inquiring into the Administration and Practical Operation of the Poor Laws*, 1834 App. A, Pt. I, pp. 100–8, 378, 575, 575–8, 669–77, and 739.

[6] Messrs. Stuart, Everett, Lewis, Maclean, and Tweedy.

> the immediate advantage of allotments is so great, that if there were no other mode of supplying them, we think it would be worthwhile, as a temporary measure, as a means of smoothing the road to improvements, to propose some general plan for providing them. . . .
>
> But, since it appears that land may be let to labourers on profitable terms, the necessity for any public enquiry, on this subject, seems to be at an end.
>
> A practice, which is so beneficial to both parties, and is known to be so, may be left to the care of their own self-interest.[3]

This rather self-satisfied and rosy-hued view of the situation may have begged many questions, but obviously it was thought that the last word had been spoken. However, in 1843 the Committee on Allotments was appointed to look into the results of the allotments system and to establish by what means, if any, practical legislative action could extend the system. It was clear that in the southern counties the Poor Law Amendment Act had by no means provided a wholly adequate answer. The Poor Law Commissioners themselves reported that in the southern counties,

> in whole districts, whilst provisions were as cheap as they have ever been of late years, and whilst the demand for employment was progressive, pauperism nevertheless continued to increase.[4]

The Report of the Allotments Committee enthusiastically reaffirmed the usefulness of allotments in relieving the poor of the agricultural districts. Nowhere in the Report is there the least suggestion that the new Poor Law has in the least obviated the 'unmixed good' resulting from 'the system of garden allotments'. None the less, the Committee felt that any compulsory enactment would be impracticable and they recommended that arrangements be left to the individual landowner and his cottagers. They were satisfied that the efforts of the parochial authorities were unsatisfactory and they thought that the Poor Law administrators should be kept away from the running of allotment schemes.[1] This time the last word does appear to have been said.

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[1] S. E. Finer, *The Life and Times of Sir Edwin Chadwick* (1952), pp. 86–87.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 70–81.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[4] *Second Annual Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, 1836, p. 42.

It is true to say that few of the objections to allotment schemes carried much weight as such in official circles. Government was cautiously favourable, but attempts to introduce an element of compulsion were never taken very seriously, partly because it was genuinely felt to be unnecessary, and no doubt partly because it would have met with immense opposition from the farmer. No Government dared risk alienating this vested interest unless absolutely convinced of the expediency of the measure—which was certainly not true of State action to provide the poor with allotments. Obviously, the system could not have spread universally while tenant farmers as a whole maintained their enmity, and to this extent at least the opposition was successful. This, after all, was an age of enormous respect for private property; in essence society rested on this concept. Supporters of the allotment system were as anxious as any to avoid the taint of interference with private property rights. Yet the implications of State assistance in providing the poor with land could not but interfere to some degree with these rights. The radical implications of the allotments concept could never be followed through while the majority of thinking men accepted as axiomatic that the State must never interfere in matters concerning private property. If allotments could be extended by the landlord, this was to the good, and the State would supply the permissive legislative framework to enable it to be done; but the authorities, at Westminster and in the parish, were not prepared to take active steps to compel the provision of land for the rural poor.

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Clearly, social welfare as exemplified by the allotments question was very much a living issue in the latter part of the eighteenth century and the earlier part of the nineteenth. There can be no doubt that the more far-reaching schemes were unpractical because in contemporary terms the administrative machinery for State intervention just did not exist. These ideas were both radical, in implying some redistribution of property by the State in favour of the poor, and conservative. However, this conservatism was not belief in the social order as it stood, but rather an anachronistic desire to return to an idealized earlier order of society. In this way a conservative body of opinion turned to an idea with very radical implications, although they would never have been thought of as such.

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[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. v–vii.

There can be no doubt that better considered and properly applied legislation would have rendered allotments more widespread, relieved some of the sufferings of the poor, and reduced the level of the poor rates. Properly organized this need not necessarily have been the threat to mobility of labour some feared. None the less, there was clearly a limit to their usefulness. Not every poor labourer could have made use of an allotment nor could every parish find the necessary land. Allotments could hardly touch the problems of sickness, old age, and the locally overlarge supply of labour. The essential point is that though allotments could never have wholly replaced other systems of poor relief (indeed, few thought they could), there was great scope for them in contemporary society to supplement and lessen the weight borne by other methods of relief.

In general terms, the movement to help the rural poor by giving them small amounts of land was very much in accord with contemporary theories of social welfare—at once philanthropic and paternalistic, and also hostile to action by the State. It owed everything to the relationship between landlord and labourer; it was a practical solution urged by practical men; and there was a built-in appeal to self-help, morality, and expediency. If, in the early 1830s, State intervention in some form or another had seemed rather more expedient, that, too, might have occurred, but in the event another, apparently truly radical, solution to the problem of the rural poor was adopted.

POPULATION

J. T. Krause

8 Some Aspects of Population Change, 1690–1790[1]

There is now a rather impressive body of evidence to show that the traditional description of English population changes between 1780 and 1850 is incorrect, in fact that it almost reverses the truth.[2] Instead of constant birth rates at a time when the death rate fell sharply between the 1780's and the 1810's (with something of a rise in mortality between the 1820's and the 1840's), it now appears that fertility rose sharply between the 1780's and the 1810's, and that in this period the death rate either remained constant or rose slightly. Then, both rates fell somewhat to the levels measured by the civil statistics of the 1840's, with mortality falling proportionately more in this interval. Thus it is correct to say that both rates had their rôle in the increased rate of population growth which took place in England and Wales after 1780, but that on balance the birth rate was the more important variable of the two.

An important buttress of the new position is an analysis of the changing adequacy of parochial registration and of the collection of registration figures by the national authorities. First, parochial registration had been relatively adequate in the early eighteenth century. The churches were where the people were, and pluralism and non-residence did not exist to nearly the same degree as in the early nineteenth century.

[1] I wish to thank the Rockefeller Foundation, whose grants for the years 1959–61 made much of this research possible.

[2] The material on which the discussion of the first three paragraphs is based can be found in my articles: 'Changes in English Fertility and Mortality, 1781–1850', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XI (1958), pp. 52–70; 'English Population Movements Between 1700 and 1850', in *International Pop. Conference, New York,* 1961, 2 vols. (London, 1963), I, pp. 583–90; 'The Changing Adequacy of English Registration, 1690–1837', in D. V. Glass and D. Eversley (eds.), *Population in History* (London, 1965), pp. 379–93.

Baptism was relatively early and private baptisms were often recorded. Even Dissenters found it advisable to have births or their baptisms recorded in the Anglican registers. Likewise, burial registration was probably fairly complete: burials of the stillborn and unbaptized were often registered (unlike the situation in the early nineteenth century), there were few non-Anglican grounds, and many burials of Dissenters were recorded in parish registers even though they did not occur in the churchyards. There was, however, a gradual erosion of the adequacy of the system throughout much of the century; but so gradual was this process that it was still working reasonably well in the 1780's. Then the rates of omission rose markedly in the 1790's and accelerated into the 1810's. A variety of factors was responsible for the worsening of parochial registration: growing imbalance between population and churches, increased pluralism and non-residence, the rapid spread after about 1795 of the new Dissent, the hostility between the new Dissent and the Anglican clergy, the opening of many new private burial grounds, and increased postponement of baptism with a resultant increase in the omissions in both baptismal and burial registers. After about 1820 the situation began to improve somewhat as the Anglican revival gained momentum, but there are many reasons to believe that the system did not regain the adequancy of the 1780's.

Second, the compilation of the parochial returns by the national authorities further confused the picture of changing fertility and mortality: they included returns from several of the country's largest private burial grounds in the official figures up until 1800, but omitted them in the period 1801–20. The changed basis of the statistics is more than enough to account for the fact that the official figures show fewer burials in 1801–10 than in 1791–1800. This neglect of burials in private grounds continued to the 1810's, at a time when such burials were increasing rapidly. But in collecting the baptismal and burial data for the 1820's and the 1830's the officials made what were for them strenuous efforts to obtain figures for non-Anglican baptisms and burials, and these efforts were sufficiently successful to cause a rise in the official burial rates of the 1820's and 1830's. Inasmuch as singularly little warning was given of the changed statistical base, many concluded that the death rate was on the rise in those decades; even John Rickman was deluded by his own statistics. Thus variations in parochial registration and the methods of collecting the material created a statistical mirage—the apparent fall in the death rate between 1780 and 1820 and an apparent rise after 1820 while fertility remained constant.

But the new view has by no means won unanimous support, to say the least. J. D. Chambers, generally acclaimed as the author of the best local study, has accepted it.[1] Dr. Eversley, however, has been equivocal in the matter: in one paper he implicitly accepted it, with perhaps an arithmetical error which would exaggerate my estimates, yet a later paper did not even mention the existence of the new position.[2] And while Phyllis Deane and W. A. Cole accept many of my criticisms of the traditional position and concede that changing fertility may well have been the major variable in demographic change after 1780, they put forward a county-by-county description of birth, death, and migration rates from 1700 to 1830 which is largely based on Brownlee's analysis.[3] More recently, P. E. Razzell accepted a little of my argument, but criticized most of it, largely basing his view on local materials.[4]

Because several studies have explicitly or implicitly cast doubt on my demographic description of the 1810's, a crucial benchmark for the interpretation of the eighteenth-century figures, I shall first deal briefly with this aspect of those studies, as well as others that seem to contradict my analysis. The major part of the present study will be a preliminary analysis of some archival and published material which has been completely neglected or little used in describing population change between roughly 1690 and 1790. Not only does the pre-industrial era have an intrinsic interest of its own, but it is quite possible that some of the evidence will help to explain trends which took place after 1780.

I

While they accept the validity of many parts of my argument, Deane and Cole present two major criticisms of it.[5] First, they suggest that something must be incorrect in my argument (which uses the age distribution of 1821, the age-specific death rates of Life Table No. 3, and the corrected population of 1811 to show that mortality and fertility had been higher in the 1810's than in the 1840's), because it implies that the percentage of omission of deaths was greater than that of births, an admittedly unusual situation. Yet, it is not so difficult to understand why registration should have been abnormal in the 1810's. Omission from Anglican baptismal registers was caused by Dissent, religious indifference, clerical negligence, and by failure to have infants publicly baptized before their deaths. But omission of burials from the registers was greater because a great proportion of the burials in non-Anglican grounds were of at least nominal Anglicans; because again many, if not most, of those who were buried in Anglican churchyards, without having received an Anglican baptism, were not entered in the parish registers; and because many Anglicans died abroad (serving in the army, navy, and merchant marine) or, to a much lesser extent, in extra-parochial places at home from which statistics were not obtained in the 1810's. After 1820, however, the birth-baptism ratio once again exceeded the death-burial ratio because large numbers of burials that had taken place in private burial yards were included in the official statistics, while other improvements in registration also cut into the burial omissions more than into the baptismal ones.[1]

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[1] J. D. Chambers, *The Workshop of the World* (London, 1961), p. 173.

[2] His articles are: 'Population in England in the Eighteenth Century; An Appraisal of Current Research', in *Internat. Pop. Conf., N.Y. 1961*, I, pp. 573–82; and 'Mortality in Britain in the Eighteenth Century: Problems and Prospects', in P. Harsin and E. Hélin (eds.), *Problèmes de Mortalité, Actes du Colloque International de Démographie Historique* (Liège, 1965), pp. 351–67.

[3] P. Deane and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688–1959* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 98–135.

[4] P. Razzell, 'Population Change in Eighteenth-Century England. A Reinterpretation', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVIII (1965), pp. 312–32.

[5] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 125–6.

Second, while conceding that it was plausible for me to assume that the survival rate for infants born in the 1810's was lower than that for the 1840's, it is claimed that the assumption to some extent begs the question at issue. This point is not vital for my argument: my assumption raises the death-rate only 1.6 per 1,000 over Farr's figure, and his estimate was based on the assumption of constant mortality. Yet I think that my assumption is not only plausible but is probable. The age-specific mortality of the various age groups who were alive in 1811 was almost certainly higher in the 1810's than in the 1840's. If this is so, then the survival ratio of those born in the 1810's was probably lower than that of those born in the 1840's. Note the U.N.'s model life tables on this point.[2] A further consideration is that high fertility tends to cause high infant and child mortality, especially under conditions in which modern methods of public health were not available.[3] Birth rates were almost certainly higher in the 1810's than in the 1840's; here, therefore, is yet another reason for believing that infant and child mortality had been higher in the earlier decade.

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[1] Krause, 'The Changing Adequacy', *passim.*

[2] United Nations, *Methods for Population Projections by Sex and Age* (New York, 1956), pp. 70–81.

[3] J. T. Krause, 'Some Implications of Recent Work in Historical Demography', *Comparative Studies in History and Society*, I (1959), pp. 164–88, 177

Several other aspects of the Deane-Cole study are relevant to my later argument in this paper. Their birth-baptism ratios varied between 1.323 and 1.326 in the eighteenth century and fell to 1.208 in the first three decades of the nineteenth. Their death-burial ratios ranged between 1.276 and 1.284 in the eighteenth century and fell to 1.149 in the early nineteenth. Their justification of these levels and trends in registration is singularly brief—one might almost say elusive. And their reliance at crucial points on the now-discredited estimates by Brownlee produces misgivings.[1] No study of parish registers and of Rickman's procedures can justify the Deane-Cole estimates, or for that matter their wildly improbable assumption that their national ratios of omission can also be validly applied to each county as well in the three periods into which their study is divided.

P. E. Razzell criticizes the idea that mortality was higher in the 1810's than in the 1840's on the ground that my explanations of the changes in mortality are invalid. For him, it is more plausible to fall back on T. H. Marshall's argument of nearly forty years ago that increasing urbanization brought increased mortality in the first half of the nineteenth century. While a more detailed discussion of causes of changed mortality in the first half of the nineteenth century will be presented in my forthcoming book, it should be noted that a description of phenomena is needed before explanation can be attempted; Mr. Razzell does not deal with mere statistics in what is after all a statistical question. His own discussion of mortality in the eighteenth century is similarly vitiated by a failure to come to grips with the statistical problems involved. If mortality generally was not very high in that century, as my later evidence suggests, then his new monocausal explanation must take its place alongside the other discredited themes. It is true that he does present some statistics on marriage in the eighteenth century, but I propose to show the weakness of these after my discussion of trends in nuptiality.

Although Dr. Eversley has not explicitly criticized my argument, the only major revision in his study of the Worcestershire parishes[2] is one that removes a prop of Razzell's argument by denying (correctly, I believe) that smallpox had been as important in 1725–30 as he had once believed. But more important to the present analysis is the fact that Eversley's trends follow roughly the same pattern as Griffith's and Brownlee's, and most important that Eversley produces an estimated death-rate of 51.63 per 1,000 for the decade 1725–34—a rate which is above the Indian rate of 1911–21, when the great influenza epidemic struck, and which is well above the rates I shall present later in this paper.[1] That his trends are similar to those of Griffith and Brownlee is not surprising, because he adopts Griffith's constant factors of omission. It should be noted that the Victoria County History reported the existence of Baptists in the area, and therefore the assumption of constant rates of omission is of doubtful validity. It may well be that the Methodists *now* regularly attend church services, but this does not prove that their spiritual predecessors received Anglican sacraments in the early nineteenth century.[2] And while Dr. Eversley is correct in arguing that the issue of certificates of burial in woollen cloth helped to insure the inclusion of the burials of Dissenters in the parish registers, few parishes bothered with such affidavits after about 1750. Were his parishes exceptions to the general rule?

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[1] They present their estimates of omission in a footnote in *Brit. Econ. Growth*, p. 110; but then in another footnote on p. 128 they note that recent research suggests that Brownlee overestimated the omissions of deaths in the eighteenth century and underestimated them in the early ninetenth.

[2] D. Eversley, 'A Survey of Population in an Area of Worcestershire from 1660 to 1850 on the Basis of Parish Registers', in Glass and Eversley, *op. cit.*, pp. 394–422.

Very important to the present task is Dr. Eversley's high estimate of mortality in 1725–34. This is a serious point, because Griffith's estimates of omissions *may* have been reasonably accurate for that period, and yet Eversley finds an exceedingly high death rate of nearly 52 per 1,000. No doubt wider swings are possible in a small sample than in a large one, but even so his rate seems high. Perhaps something is wrong with his estimated population total? His starting-point here was the hearth taxes of 1665–72, although he noted that these were difficult to use because the number of exemptions was not given and the rate of exemption varied widely in near-by counties.[3] His conclusion was that there were 5,828 persons in his sample of twelve parishes and this figure is used as the base for his projections into the eighteenth century. Yet, the Compton 'census' for these same twelve parishes gives a population of 5,297 communicants for 1676.[4] The Compton 'census' thus suggests that there were, in fact, about 13,000 persons in the area at that time, and therefore the estimated rates for much of the eighteenth century have to be scaled down considerably. If in so doing some of the rates appear to be absurd, then perhaps some of Eversley's other assumptions should be examined more closely.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 404.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 397.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 399.

[4] I used the copy in the William Salt Library, Stafford.

2

Although it is generally agreed that the population of England and Wales grew from between 5.3 and 6.1 million in 1700 to between 9.2 and 9.7 million in 1801, the existing studies of data which were gathered at the national level are unsatisfactory in depicting variations in growth before 1780;[1] and a knowledge of the temporal variations is especially important for the interpretation of some of the evidence which follows.

The most satisfactory sketches of demographic growth in the eighteenth century are furnished by the various local studies of parish registers, most notably Chambers's study of the Vale of Trent.[2] In order to supplement such studies, I have constructed a sample of about 200 parishes, which have been divided into two roughly equal groups, the dividing line between them being the line between the mouths of the Humber and the Severn. (No Welsh parishes have been included.) With the exception of a few urban parishes in market towns, the sample is a rural one. The sources were printed registers, manuscript copies at the Society of Genealogists, and in a few cases original parish registers and bishop's transcripts. Originally I had hoped to use five parishes from each county, but this was not possible. As a result, the sample contains few parishes for Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Huntingdonshire, Rutland, Northamptonshire, and Nottinghamshire. To fill this gap I expanded my coverage of Bedfordshire, a county which shares many common characteristics with its neighbours and a county for which there is an excellent series of published registers, probably the best-edited series for the country. Further, Professor Chambers graciously gave me his annual figures for Nottinghamshire, figures which in general are similar to those of the northern part of my sample.

Some comments on the methods of tabulation and the uses to which the resulting figures are put are relevant. In many parishes early in the century, and in some well into the century, one finds many entries of the burials of stillborn infants (exact definition unknown) and of unbaptized infants or children. In such cases I have added a corresponding figure to the baptismal totals of that year. I stopped counting entries after 1794 because I have little confidence in the parish registers of that time. I have made no attempt to calculate any series of birth, death, and marriage rates for several reasons: the difficulty of estimating the total population, ignorance about the amount and type of migration, and the differing degrees of omissions of births, deaths, and marriages. Instead of the customary vital rates, I have chosen to use the vital index (births divided by deaths, or, more accurately for this study, baptisms divided by burials) as a measure of the rate of growth. While my goals are thus rather limited in some respects, the sample, supplemented by others should provide a useful backdrop for the analysis to follow.

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[1] See the references which are cited in footnote 1.

[2] J. D. Chambers, *The Vale of Trent 1670–1800*, Supp. No. 3, *Econ. Hist. Rev.* Also of more than average value is J. D. Marshall, *Furness and the Industrial Revolution* (Barrow-in-Furness, 1958), esp. pp. 97–126. Many others could be listed.

It will be noted that these rural and market-town parishes give added grounds for the belief that demographic growth was much more marked in the second half of the eighteenth century than in the first. Taking the sample as a whole, we find the vital index rising from 1.15 in the period 1690–1749 to 1.34 in 1750–95. The difference is made rather more impressive by the undoubted fact that many more baptisms escaped registration as the century went on. And important for subsequent analysis is the observation that the real rate of growth in the South in the first half of the century was probably equal to that in the North, since registration of baptisms was undoubtedly more defective in the South than in the North during that time. It is also interesting to note that the quinquennium 1745–9 was the beginning of the steady rise. After that period every quinquennium in both parts of the sample had a vital index which was higher than the average for 1690–1750.

In the short run there seems to be little doubt that the death rate was the major variable. The highest death rates of the century probably came between 1725 and 1729, but the years of the 1730's and early 1740's were hardly healthy ones. Unfortunately, as noted above, the data in this sample cannot be used to provide the population totals with which to calculate rates to measure both long- and short-term trends in fertility and mortality. However, there are a number of censuses for the period 1695–1705 (some with breakdowns by age, sex, and marital status), Thomas Short's 'vital rates' for the 1720's, 1730's, and early 1740's, and a considerable number of censuses and other materials for the 1770's and 1780's. These materials, used with the relevant parish registers and in conjunction with the above sample of parish registers, suggest that, in fact, changes in fertility were the major long-term variable in population growth.

The period 1695–1705 was apparently one of relatively low average mortality, in which the vital index was somewhat above the average for the first half of the century. Neither the estimates of Griffith nor Brownlee showed a high mortality in this period. All in all, one is not surprised to find that the burial rate in twenty-eight parishes with a total population of 12,202 persons was 23.4 per 1,000 and that the baptismal rate

Table 1. Quinquennial Baptismal, Burial, and Marital Totals together with Vital Indices

Years	North				South			
	Baps.	Burs.	Marrs.	Vital Index	Baps.	Burs.	Marrs.	Vital Index
1690–4	6,490	5,527	1,399	1.18	9,107	8,514	1,729	1.07
1695–1700	6,858	6,097	1,629	1.13	9,557	7,911	2,214	1.21
1700–4	7,460	5,423	1,865	1.38	10,126	8,250	2,403	1.23
1705–9	6,890	5,529	1,555	1.25	9,567	8,640	2,296	1.11
1710–14	6,559	5,499	1,691	1.19	8,834	8,469	2,363	1.04
1715–19	7,402	5,662	1,987	1.31	9,710	8,104	2,557	1.20
1720–4	7,353	6,373	2,160	1.15	10.044	9,017	2,670	1.11
1725–9	6,924	8,162	1,848	.85	9,955	10,333	2,465	.99
1730–4	7,712	6,317	2,167	1.22	10,486	10,221	3,079	1.03
1735–9	8,217	5,900	1,989	1.39	10,916	8,869	2,693	1.23
1740–4	8,011	6,487	1,991	1.24	10.215	10,317	2,450	.99
1745–9	8,570	5,845	2,150	1.47	10,264	8,722	2,570	1.18
1750–4	8,575	5,910	2,137	1.45	10,899	8,655	2,747	1.26
1755–9	8,651	6,353	2,483	1.36	11,145	8,808	2,844	1.27
1760–4	9,233	6,727	2,580	1.37	11,496	9,784	3,346	1.17
1765–9	9,269	6,784	2,686	1.37	11,630	10,044	3,216	1.16
1770–4	9,705	6,928	3,027	1.40	12,672	9,306	3,281	1.36
1775–9	11,149	7,349	3,064	1.56	13,192	9,512	3,503	1.39
1780–4	11,061	8,062	2,964	1.37	12,784	10,989	3,368	1.16
1785–9	11,748	8,534	3,287	1.38	13,671	9,390	3,535	1.46
1790–4	12,077	8,996	3,168	1.34	14,517	9,453	3,677	1.54
1690–1749	88,446	72,821	22,431	1.21	118,781	107,367	29,489	1.11
1750–94	91,468	65,643	25,396	1.39	112,006	85,941	29,517	1.30

was 30.9 per 1,000.[1] I am inclined to think that these ecclesiastical rates are very close to the actual vital rates. This was a time when the ecclesiastical system was working reasonably well, and omissions from the censuses probably counterbalanced or more than counterbalanced negligent registration. After working closely with the census and parish registers, I think that Harley was quite correct in criticizing King's rather naïve acceptance of the figures of the assessment lists.[2]

But the real problem about mortality in the eighteenth century is the height of mortality in the late 1720's, the undoubted high point of the century. Was it high enough to constitute a major setback to demographic growth, or was it not very important over a ten- or fifteen-year period? My sample suggests that it was but a temporary setback, but it is desirable to use actual rates if one can get them.

Fortunately, Short collected a fair amount of evidence on the area around Sheffield (and indeed the North was hit harder than the South).[3] His evidence suggests strongly that while mortality may seem dramatically high in the late 1720's, it was, in fact, not very important. His sample, which includes Sheffield itself, shows a burial rate of between 28.7 and 29.1 per 1,000. The indefiniteness is caused by the fact that he had the figures of sixty-one censuses which had been taken between 1728 and 1745, and the number of baptisms, burials, and marriages for a variable period, usually ten or twelve years, before the census year. Hence, the census population is not the average population of the period in which the baptisms, burials, and marriages occurred. Accordingly I have revised the population totals by subtracting the excess of baptisms over burials from the censal total and then averaging the two totals, a process which raises the rates slightly. This minor correction may give a somewhat more accurate measure of growing areas, but probably some of the rural parishes had sufficient emigration to siphon off some or all of the growth, so I include both sets of rates. It should be noted also that some of the parishes have data only for the period after 1729, so that some useful comparisons are possible.

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[1] The parishes include: twenty-one parishes of East Kent, Ash (Surrey), Donington (Salop), Harefield (Middlesex), Lichfield, and St. James's parish of Bury St. Edmunds.

[2] B. M. *Harleian Papers* 7021. In East Langdon (Kent) the census simply did not list any children. And wherever I have been able to make a detailed check of the nominal lists, I find evidence of omitted families, omitted individuals, and sometimes omitted hamlets. This last point about omitted hamlets is not quite proper, because the censuses were supposed to refer to civil, not ecclesiastical, parishes. Although the two did coincide on occasion, often the former was smaller than the latter, sometimes very much smaller. Thus, those who would carelessly use these censuses for the calculation of vital rates fall into a trap, as did Gregory King on at least one occasion. Also, note T. Short, *New Observations, Natural, Moral, Civil, Political, and Medical, on City, Town and Country Bills of Mortality* (London 1751), xv, for a criticism of these censuses.

[3] Short, *New Observations*, pp. 132–3.

Table 2. Baptismal and Burial Rates calculated from Short's Data

	Revised population	Baptismal rate		Burial rate	
		Unrevised	Revised	Unrevised	Revised
5 market towns (inc. late 1720's)	22,756	32.9	33.2	31.5	31.7
2 market towns (no data for late 1720's)	4,129	26.4	26.9	22.8	23.2
41 rural parishes (inc. late 1720's)	12,176	32.7	32.9	27.7	27.9
9 rural parishes (no data for late 1780's)	3,360	31.6	33.3	24.1	25.4
4 rural parishes (temporal coverage unknown)	1,208	30.5		21.7	

The overall burial rate of between 28.7 and 29.1 per 1,000 is not remarkably high when it is remembered that most of the data contain at least some years from the late twenties, and that Sheffield, a town of 14,105 persons, was included. It is not so much above the national death rate of about 27 per 1,000 in the 1810's. Further, the two market towns and the nine rural parishes for which material was available only for the thirties and the early forties had burial rates of 25.4 per 1,000 or less. In view of the evidence that the early thirties had somewhat above average mortality levels (as determined by my sample of northern parishes), the rates do not seem excessively high.

Unfortunately there is no way of checking Short's data. He did not even name the parishes in his sample, and his papers have apparently not survived. But he did state that his population totals were gained by direct enumerations, a statement which is borne out by an examination of his material. However, it is highly probable that the censuses understated the true totals—taking a census is not an easy task, especially when there are some religious prejudices on the subject—although I doubt that the understatement could have been as serious as in the assessments of 1695–1705, which Short himself criticized.

His burial statistics are also broadly acceptable. In addition to the general grounds which have been given elsewhere for believing that burial registration was fairly accurate in the first half of the eighteenth century, I think that there is another reason for accepting Short's evidence. In discussing the parochial figures on which he relied so much, he estimated that the burials of stillborn and of chrisom children made up about one-thirteenth of all burials.[1] Of course, stillbirths should not be included in the calculation of crude death rates or infant mortality; hence there is one counterbalancing factor for any negligence in recording. Moreover, the burial of so many chrisom children suggests that early infant mortality, probably a major type of omission from the registers, was reasonably well covered in his sample.

However, the baptismal figures are probably not so satisfactory. I suspect that Short thought so as well, because he was careful to indicate the existence of Dissenters in some of the parishes. Moreover, some of the parishes show suspiciously low baptismal rates, although not impossibly low ones for the age. But I would suggest that it is highly unlikely that the birth-baptism ratios for the whole sample was as high as 1.2, and probably was not as high as 1.15. There is, then, little reason to suppose that the birth rate was as high as the 40–42 per 1,000 which prevailed in the country as a whole in the 1810's.

Unfortunately there is little other available material, at least not without going into a discussion of method and interpretation which would be too long for this paper, although there are some additional pieces of clear-cut evidence. Censuses were taken in Lower Heyford (Oxon.) in the years 1729 and 1742.[2] The baptisms and burials unfortunately were tabulated by decades, not single years. If one uses both censuses to derive the average population, then the burial rate for 1720 to 1740 was 20.1 per 1,000 and the baptismal rate was 32.1. Unbaptized children were apparently recorded in this parish, so the burial figure is probably not too far from the mark. Another such instance is Teddington (Middlesex) where the burial rate was 25.5 per 1,000, which is not bad considering the proximity to London; in Farringdon (Hants) the burial rate could have been as high as 18.0 per 1,000 or as low as 15.9 in the same years.[1]

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 55–56.

[2] J. C. Blomfield, *History of the Present Deanery of Bicester* (Oxford and London, 1882–94), pp. 22–25.

Relatively little material is available for the 1750's and 1760's, but for the 1770's, thanks to the population controversy of the period, it is relatively abundant. My sample of parish registers suggests that mortality was lower then than in either the 1760's or the 1780's, and the available rates also give evidence of low mortality, relatively low even by comparison with the 1840's (see Table 3):

Table 3. Baptismal and Burial Rates for Selected Areas (the rates for groups of parishes are the averages of the parochial rates)

Area	Period	Baptismal rate	Burial rate
30 rural parishes, Cumberland	1771–80	29	18
14 rural parishes, mainly Lancs.	mainly 1770's	38	21
Manchester	1770–79	40	36
Carlisle	1779–87	31	25

Sources: The Heysham Papers, Carlisle Public Library; R. Price, *Observation on Reversionary Payments*, 6th ed., 2 vols. (London, 1803); T. Percival, *The Works, Literary, Moral, and Medical*, 4 vols. (London, 1807); J. Milne, *A Treatise on the Valuation of Annuities and Assurances*, 2 vols. (London, 1807).

There is, of course, always the problem of the adequacy of registration, a problem which I do not believe to have been very serious in this case. Thomas Percival tried to include the baptisms and burials of Dissenters in the Bills of Mortality for Manchester. He estimated that about fifty Dissenting burials per year escaped registration because they took place outside the parish (a sharp contrast to the annual average of *at least* 1,347 burials in non-Anglican grounds for the years 1813–20). While other evidence exists to show that Dissent was not very important as yet in these northern areas, it is still probable that registration had deteriorated somewhat in the decades since the 1730's. Stillbirths and chrisom children were disappearing from the registers, and probably baptism was being increasingly postponed with consequences for both baptismal and burial registers. But even so I doubt that the omissions of burials amounted to much more than 10 per cent, if indeed they were as high as that.

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[1] B.M. *Add. Mss. 38330*, f. 244–50. I am indebted to Dr. A. H. John for this reference. I should also note that my conclusions about mortality in the 1720 and 1730s are very close to those of J. D. Marshall, *Furness*, p. 114.

In evaluating the rates one must also remember that the national rates were about 27 per 1,000 in the 1810's, and that they fell to 23 in the 1840's. Seen in this light the rates suggest that a falling death rate was not important between the 1770's and the early nineteenth century, although there probably had been a moderate decline from the levels of 1690–1750. For example, Manchester's burial rate for the 1770's was only 3 per 1,000 less than the death rate of the 1840's, and likewise there was little difference in the other sections of the sample.

Thus it seems that there was no dramatic revolution in mortality. True, rural death rates may have been somewhat lower in the 1770's than in the 1690's, but the former decade was somewhat healthier than either the 1760's or the 1780's. Also, any decline in rural mortality over this period was undoubtedly counterbalanced on the national level by the growth of relatively unhealthy cities such as London, Manchester, Liverpool, and Nottingham, among others.

But one noteworthy feature of Table 3 is the high fertility shown by the parishes in the neighbourhood of Manchester. A crude baptismal rate of 38 per 1,000 is well above any such rate that I have found for earlier decades of the century, and this at a time when registration was probably not as complete as it had once been. Further, some of the individual parishes show what was for England phenomenal baptismal rates: 53.7 per 1,000 for Horwich (Lancs.) and 44.7 for Chowbent (Lancs.) In other words, at least one region of the country was beginning to equal, or was equalling, the national rate of the 1810's. And it should be borne in mind that it was the southern parts of Lancashire and the West Riding, together with the northern parts of Cheshire and Staffordshire, that had the high fertility rates during the 1810's.

While a birth rate of possibly 40–42 per 1,000 was uncommon in the eighteenth century, and was maintained for but a short time in the nineteenth, it is wise to remember that such rates hardly indicate a breakdown of all hindrances to reproduction. French Canada had a crude birth rate of 60 per 1,000 in the eighteenth century, the United States one of about 55 in the years around 1800, and the *guberniya* of

Orenburg one of 58.2 between 1861 and 1913.[1] Frontiers, in the classic sense of the word, had really high birth rates whether expressed in crude or refined terms.

3

To provide a complete demographic explanation of the increased birth rate is out of the question, because it could have resulted from such a wide variety of circumstances: a fall in the female age of marriage, an increase in the proportion of women who married, increased illegitimacy, and an increase of age-specific marital fertility rates, or some combination of these factors. While illegitimacy probably rose during the century it is altogether likely that it constituted too small a part of the increase to merit discussion. Changes in age-specific marital fertility may well have been important, however. Most peasant societies know of contraceptive techniques of some sort, and other means are effective: pure and simple abstinence, *coitus interruptus*, and prolonged lactation. But were these methods used and if so to what extent? I think that convincing answers to these questions will be hard to come by. In principle, reconstruction of families based on parish registers should show changes in age-specific marital fertility, but my experiments with this technique have been frustrating—there are too many uncertain identifications involved.

Fortunately, on the question of possible changes in the age of marriage there is a relative abundance of relevant materials, materials which suggest that marriage had been quite late at the beginning of the period and that a sizeable reduction in the age of marriage had taken place by the 1770's and 1780's. Of prime importance here are those censuses for the various years between 1695 and 1705 which give data on age, sex, and marital status. Happily the parishes concerned show a variety of geographical and economic circumstances: Lichfield (Staffs.) was a cathedral town, whereas Buckfastleigh (Devon) was an industrial village in which textiles were important; Stoke-on-Trent, roughly half of whose townships were included in the census, was beginning to become important in mining and pottery; and for purely agricultural villages there are Shustoke (Warwicks.), Swepston (Leics.), and Wembworthy and Ringmore (Devon). The data, however, are available in different forms. I have lists of the inhabitants of Buckfastleigh, and roughly half of those of Stoke-on-Trent, Lichfield, Ringmore, and Wembworthy, but it is not always possible to distinguish between spinsters and widows. However, the figures for the young age groups provide a good measure of the age of marriage because there is evidence to suggest that there were few young widows. Table 4 presents the results of this material, and also contains evidence from Sweden in 1800, a good example of relatively late marriage, and from England in 1871.

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[1] *Census of Canada, 1870–71*, IV, pp. 40 and 65; W. S. Thompson, 'La population des Etats-Unis d'Amérique', *Population*, III (1948), pp. 115–26; A. Rashin, *Naselenie Rossii za 100 Let* (Moscow, 1956), p. 165. J. Potter ('The Growth of Population in America, 1700–1860', in Glass and Eversley, *Pop. in Hist.*, pp. 631–88) has suggested that the U.S. rate is too high, but I think that he has overestimated the role of migration in adding to the *permanent* growth of the population up to 1815, a topic to which I shall turn in a later publication.

Table 4. Percentages by Age Group of Women who were Married

	15–19	20–24	25–29	30–34	35–39	40–44	45–49
Lichfield	1	15	47	74	63	72	81
Shustoke	0	0*	14	80	67	87	
Swepston	0	0	25	50	36	100	100
Wembworthy	0	11	50	83	71	86	100
Ringmere	0	17	55	63	60	50	25
Stoke-on-Trent	0	16	62	70	83	73	70
Buckfastleigh	0	34	85	73	58	67	72
Sweden, 1800	3	19	51	68	75	77	74
England, 1871	3	34	62	74	77	76	74

*Data refers to the years 20–23.

Sources: Brit. Mus. Add. MSS., Harleian Papers, Nos. 6832 and 7022; Lond. C.C., King MSS.; Wm. Salt Library; for Wembworthy Prof. W. G. Hoskins kindly asked the owner of the document to make a copy for me.

Obviously marriage was relatively late at the beginning of the period. The averages of the percentages married in the various age groups of the seven localities are roughly comparable to the Swedish figures of 1800, but marriage did come a little later than in Sweden. Of a total of 309 women aged 15–19 only one was married. And with the exception of Buckfastleigh all localities had a lower percentage of married women aged 20–24 than did Sweden, and especially, than did the England of 1871. Indeed, the lateness of marriage in Shustoke, Swepston, and Wembworthy is especially striking. But while marriage was late in six of the parishes, the great majority of women apparently married eventually.

Further evidence suggesting that marriage was comparatively late at the beginning of our period is the large number of servants who lived in the households of their employers, especially in agricultural areas. In twenty-eight civil parishes of East Kent (with a population of over 5,500) roughly 18 per cent of the *total* population consisted of servants who lived in, a figure which is the same as that found in Wembworthy.[1] Similar percentages held for Featherston Const. (Staffs.), four townships of Atcham parish (Salop.), and ten hamlets of Hackney parish (Middlesex). And, if we can add in the sojourners (a possibility which is suggested by King's wording), Sevenoaks (Kent), and Poplar and Blackwell (parts of Stepney parish, Middlesex) may be added to the list in which 18 per cent, or slightly more, of the total population fell into categories of servants living in—or 'Single People or Sojourners', as King called them.[2] Inasmuch as servants were almost invariably over the age of 15 and unmarried (as presumably was also the case with King's sojourners), it seems that about 27–30 per cent of the population over the age of 15 were unmarried servants and sojourners. Thus, taking into consideration the fact that many of the non-servants over the age of 15 were also unmarried, it is obvious that we are dealing with a society in which marriage was normally quite late.

While this essay is mainly descriptive and not an attempt at causal analysis, some comments on Buckfastleigh's precocious nuptiality are relevant. The village was one in which textile production was important, and Devon's serge industry was booming.[3] Professor Chambers's analysis of the marriage licences for Gloucestershire and Nottinghamshire shows that textile workers had a relatively early age of marriage. And in 1821 the highest fertility rates occurred, in fact, in the regions in which woollen textile production, still basically a domestic system of production, was most important. Thus a prosperous textile industry

[1] Kent County Record Office, Q/CTz2.

[2] Lon. C.C. *King MSS.*, pp. 90–92.

[3] I am indebted to Prof. W. G. Hoskins for information on Buckfastleigh's textiles. On the state of Devon's textile activity, see E. A. G. Clark, *The Ports of the Exe Estuary 1660–1860* (Exeter, 1960), p. 102.

probably accounts for the relatively early marriage of this village in the years immediately preceding 1700.

So it seems likely that late marriage was general in the early eighteenth century. But did the decline in the age of marriage begin in the eighteenth century, or was it a nineteenth-century phenomenon? While there is but little detailed information on marriage for the period from roughly 1700 to 1770, enough materials exist for the 1770's and 1780's to suggest that some fall had taken place by those decades. Some comments are required, however, before an analysis is undertaken. With the exception of Ardingley (Sussex) and Branscombe (Devon), all data were taken directly from the parish registers (or the bishop's transcripts, in the case of Carlisle). It is fortunate that some clergymen collected this material, because it is rare to have information for almost every marriage that took place in a particular parish during the given period. Since the figures show no particular digital preference, I think that they can be taken as substantially accurate, although the figures for Ardingley and Branscombe have been obtained by reconstructing the families from the parish registers; there was a fairly considerable degree of mobility and it is not possible to obtain the ages of all those who were married in the parish during the period; in addition, the frequency of certain family names in each region makes for uncertainty of identification. But regardless of these qualifications, the figures in Table 5 suggest that the age of marriage had fallen since the 1690's. Whereas teenage marriage had been exceedingly rare in the parishes of my sample for 1690–1705, it ranged from 6 to possibly 37 per cent of all women who married for the first time in the later period. The median and mode also show relatively early marriage. The mean is generally somewhat higher, because of the substantial numbers of women who married late: in Carlisle, for example, over 8 per cent of the first marriages were of women aged 36 and above, and in Bridekirk the percentage was much higher.

Finally, I must deal very briefly with Mr. Razzell's use of data on nuptiality, data which seem to show constant marriage rates and a constant age of first marriage. First, crude marriage rates are a notoriously deceptive measure of trends in nuptiality, as T. H. Marshall pointed out long ago.[1] In addition, Razzell's first rates are based on Short's figures, almost all of which refer to the 1730's. This period, following as it did the high mortality of the late twenties, was one of

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[1] T. H. Marshall, 'The Population Problem during the Industrial Revolution', *Econ. Hist.*, I (1929), pp. 429–56, 444–53.

Table 5. Age at First Marriage of Women in Selected Parishes

Parish	Period	Mean	Median	Mode	% under age 20
Ardingley (Sussex)	1781–90	20.9	21.5	23	37
Branscombe (Devon)	1781–1812	24.6	21.3	19	32
Bridekirk (Cumb.)	1771–82	25.8	25.0	23	9
Carlisle (Cumb.)	1772–7	25.0	23.8	22	14
Gisburn (Yorks.)	1780–90	25.0	23.0	21	6
Linton-in-Craven (Yorks.)	1778–90	24.8	23.5	21	11
Newton Reigny and Skelton (Cumb.)	1781–90	25.8	25.3	19 and 22	11
Penrith (Cumb.)	1778–90	27.0	24.5	23	10
Shap (Westmorland)	1772–80	25.8	24.0	21	9

higher than average marriage rates, as may be seen in my Table 1. Dr. Eversley also noted the jump in marriage rates in the 1730's, but I think ascribed too much importance to them as a factor responsible for vital movements later in the century.[1] As can be seen in Table 1, fluctuations in nuptiality were much more marked in the first half of the century than in the second half. Second, to compare ages at marriage as given in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century marriage licences with that of the general population in 1839–41 is not quite cricket. Few people were married by licence; the vast majority were married by banns. Of those who were married by licence, the great preponderance were drawn from the upper classes, who probably tended to marry earlier than did the mass of the population.[2]

[1] Eversley, *Pop. in Worcs.*, p. 409. Another disquieting feature of his venture into local history is the fact that about half of his marriage 'data' for 1754–74 is interpolated; the marriage register of that period for Bromsgrove (whose population accounted for about half of the whole sample) is missing. Yet, a little research would have turned up the missing figures, see W. A. Cotton, *Bromsgrove Church: Its History and Antiquities* (London, 1881), p. 138.

[2] J. T. Krause, 'Some Neglected Factors in the English Industrial Revolution', *Jour. Econ. Hist.*, XIX (1959), pp. 528–40, 530–1.

D. E. C. Eversley

9 The Home Market and Economic Growth in England, 1750–1780

1 Introduction[1]

In recent years the increasing preoccupation of economists with the problems of the developing countries has caused a systematic re-examination of the process of economic growth in general. More from a desire to use past experience as an aid towards the identification of categories for analysis than from any simple belief in the possibility of deriving universal explanations from a system of crude parallels, the economic historian of eighteenth-century England has been called upon to make his own contribution to the resumed debate. In this way he has come to rewrite, in the space of a decade, the account of a period which, in a generation from Cunningham to Mantoux and Clapham, had already received thorough treatment. In the nineteen-fifties it may have appeared sufficient to fill in the gaps left in the general outline by providing detailed accounts of individual firms and areas, or to continue the discussion of the precise role played by such categories as the rate of interest or entrepreneurship as a factor in industrial growth.

Ten years later the chain of interrelated events which we have come to call the Industrial Revolution would pass muster, in any review, only if it could be made to fit the categories of the era dominated by the logic of the schools of Rostow, Kuznets, and others whose main preoccupations were not with history at all, but with a world where backward nations were failing to reach the point of 'take-off into sustained growth' which marks the beginning of a true revolution—meaning a drastic change in the rate of change. The main explanations put forward under these new headings have been well reviewed by Hartwell[1] and we need not repeat them here. There is in many of these reinterpretative studies a penchant, as Hartwell noticed, to select one cause or set of causes rather than another as being the principal agent of change. Each writer, whilst acknowledging that the industrial revolution could only occur when a large number of conditions had been satisfied, feels nevertheless that he must draw attention to something which was unique in the situation of eighteenth-century England, so that one could claim, with some hindsight and following a logic not susceptible to proof, that if all other conditions had been fulfilled, there was yet one which was the crux of the matter: whereas some of the others might be superfluous, one set of social or economic conditions was indispensable.

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[1] This contribution began as a paper read in Cambridge in 1962. It was then circulated under the title 'In Pudding Time' and, as the name implies, was mainly concerned with the earlier eighteenth century. This part of it was soon superseded by the appearance of A. H. John's paper of 1964. The duplicated version received detailed criticism from a number of friends whom I would like to thank for their help in revision: T. S. Ashton, W. Ashworth, T. C. Barker, J. Blackman, J. D. Chambers, A. W. Coats, E. Hobsbawm, J. D. Marshall, H. C. Pentland, S. Pollard and B. E. Supple. They are not responsible for the errors that remain despite their advice to remove them.

What follows here is open to this charge: except that there are three sets of conditions which appear to be equally important, which are to some extent linked, and which, it may fairly be claimed, cannot be found in the same combination in other European countries at that time, and have perhaps not reappeared since, in the same strength, in countries struggling to escape from the fruitless cycle of beginning effort and subsequent stagnation. They experience a failure to maintain equilibrium growth rates for three sectors: home food production, domestic demand for consumer goods, and population.

2 The Thesis Stated

To lend greater precision to this contribution, and to place it in the context of material already published, it may be as well to start with the theme developed by A. H. John and others, most succinctly stated in a paper given at the Economic History Conference at Reading in 1964 and since published.[2] For our purposes, the most relevant part of this thesis is one we readily accept: that the low food prices of the period 1730–50, due to a succession of favourable seasons and agricultural improvements, allowed large sections of the working population to feed well and yet retain a margin between income and expenditure required for minimum subsistence, a margin which could be spent, and was spent, on consumer goods, thus providing the necessary buoyancy of the home market at a time when industry was just beginning to transform itself, in some sectors, by the adoption of power, division of labour, and techniques of mass production and distribution. Let us rephrase this general argument in a series of propositions (at present only to be applied to the period before 1750) which are either implied or spelled out in John's work:

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[1] R. M. Hartwell, 'The Causes of the Industrial Revolution. An Essay in Methodology', *Econ. Hist. Rev*. 2nd ser., XVIII (1965), p. 164.

[2] A. H. John, 'Agricultural Productivity and Economic Growth in England, 1700–1760', *Jour. Econ. Hist.*, XXV (1965), pp. 19 ff.

(1) Agricultural production rises relative to the existing domestic and foreign markets to a sufficient degree to allow prices to remain stable or even fall compared with earlier periods.

(2) This makes it possible for a larger number of people to work in industry and live in towns without causing famine.

(3) Population rises only slowly, at any rate not fast enough to cause food shortages, and the economically active part of the population in particular remains small enough in relation to labour demand (which may be a matter of place, skill, age or sex), at least in some areas, to keep the level of money wages high relative to food prices.[1]

(4) The workers, or some of them, still maintain their earnings, though they could satisfy minimum needs with less work.

(5) They spend their earnings in part on manufactured commodities. The price of these rises, or the producers see that they can sell more at the same price—in either case an incentive is given to increase the scope of production.

(6) Though exports take place, and their level may be rising, this additional home demand is seen as the major stable and long-term factor in promoting industrialization.

We shall have to qualify all these assertions later, but let us first of all come to the final part of John's thesis: that this state of affairs lasted only until about 1750, and that after that date there was something of a collapse due to bad weather, and failure of agricultural productivity to keep pace with accelerated population growth and urbanization, and this led to the failure of the domestic market. If after 1750 industrialization continued, it must have been due to exports taking the place of home demand.

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[1] For examples of regional shortage, see A. H. John, 'War and the English Economy', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., VII (1954–5), p. 340.

Against this view we now advance a different thesis: that the situation continued to be favourable to home demand from 1750 to at least 1780;[1] that exports before that date were neither at a sufficiently high level nor sufficiently stable to warrant the amount of investment that took place; that the rise in food prices was not drastic before 1780 in relation to incomes; and that in any case some rise in food prices does not necessarily squeeze the margin of expenditure on other products; that the period from 1750 to 1780 is crucial as the 'warming-up' period just before the take-off into sustained growth; that these thirty years laid a sufficient foundation of home consumers to enable industry to withstand the collapse of exports in the seventies; that this happened because increased real incomes tended to be spent on consumer goods rather than extra food purchases, thus still further stimulating industrial production and accelerating the movement of existing and new labour into the manufacturing sector; and that in any case the whole mechanism is to be explained not in terms of global populations, classes, or commodities, but in terms of regions and income groups.

Statistically, the period 1750–80 must be shown, if these assertions are to be proved, to have satisfied these conditions: the population of the country must have risen faster than before 1750, but not as fast as after 1780; prices of foodstuffs must have risen faster than in the period which used to be regarded as one of depression for the agricultural sector, but not as fast as during the period of war and explosive population growth; production of commodities, where this can be measured, must be shown to have grown faster than population, and faster than exports; innovations must have been publicized and adopted at a greater rate than previously, and more new enterprises started, especially of the kind catering for the home market.

This kind of examination has to be conducted principally at a quantitative level. Too much of what has appeared in the past has been of a literary kind. The hardships of the later part of the eighteenth century, which obtruded themselves into the historian's consciousness to the extent of precluding, apparently, any confidence in the possibility of an extended domestic market, are the legacy of indignant pamphleteers and their twentieth-century chroniclers: both rightly concerned that we should know of the miseries suffered by a part of the population, they deflected our attention from the fortunes of another part. In the same way the opinions of contemporary political economists, though often valuable, are equally often wrong-headed and misleading. We shall try as far as possible, therefore, not to use the analysis of these writers, except where they quote facts as to prices, wages or output.

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[1] These breaks are artificial and have no normative meaning, but are dictated by one's precursors. For a different chronology yielding different interpretations, cf. Habakkuk and Deane, 'The Take-off in Britain', ch. 4 in W. W. Rostow (ed.), *The Economics of Take-off into Sustained Growth* (1963), p. 67.

3 The Domestic Mass Market

In concentrating on the three factors mentioned, we do not dismiss others as irrelevant; indeed, it will be found that there is a good deal of overlap. For instance, many writers stress the need to accumulate capital in sufficient amounts to make industrial output rise faster than population. Some of this capital comes from sections of the population for whom levels of prices of necessaries, or the profitability of agriculture, are not of importance: but some of it also comes from the savings of those who may suffer from unfavourable price movements, and a great deal of it comes from landowners who might have had no investible funds had the price of produce remained too low to ensure a continued flow of rents. To take another category of explanations, the discussion of the significance of 'leading sectors'[1] may be as much concerned with industries serving the home market as with exports. General theories of social structure, such as Nef's view of the importance of the new attitude engendered by the Renaissance in providing both a taste for a civilized standard of living and attitudes to labour and the poor consistent with a rise of mass consumption, provide a framework for the analysis of demand.[2]

Nevertheless, the claim is here put forward that there is one central theme to all industrialization analysis: the emergence, and maintenance, of a large domestic market for mass-produced consumer goods.[1] The term 'market' must here be understood in a specific sense: specific, that is, to the time, the place, and the sector of the economy. When we say that the rapid growth of the iron industry in the second half of the eighteenth century was based on a domestic market we mean by this only that, given the state of communications, in the areas where this industry was located, and given the relative fall in prices which was associated with large-scale production, it was possible to find people with incomes and demand schedules capable of absorbing this increased output. There is, in other words, not one market any more than there is one economy. There are regions, some of which have been clearly identified, and others which are more difficult to describe, because they varied in exact delimitation for various products, and at different times.[2] Chambers's *Vale of Trent* is perhaps the classic case of the description of such a region within which food was produced, industry grew, and the products of industry were sold—almost indeed a closed system, but one which makes sense in relation to the factors operating within the economy.[3] There are also, besides the regions, recognizably separate markets, on a regional or national scale, by income groups, occupations, or fashions. The growth in the production of soap and bleach and alkalis is not due to any general adoption of habits of cleanliness, but to the emergence of some more groups, at the margin, who washed regularly, and beyond that margin, those who washed occasionally; to the increased demand of some households for white linen, relatively more people who dressed in muslin, and so on. For this purpose it is enough if a large part of that new market is purely local and even if it consists to some extent of those who help in the production of a commodity and their households. There is such a thing as a subsistence element in every industry.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 70. We omit here any general discussion of theories of economic growth or of particular aspects, such as the theory of effective demand. The leading recent writers on growth (Rostow, Kuznets, Gershenkron) mostly concentrate on the supply side of the implications of higher *per capita* incomes, and on savings, but not on consumption. We shall not discuss here whether any account which fails to describe the structure of demand is complete.

[2] J. U. Nef, *Cultural Foundations of Industrial Civilization* (Cambridge, 1958), esp. ch. V and VI.

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[1] For other statements of this view, sometimes in a different context, see Hartwell, *op. cit.*, pp. 169, 177; Witt Bowden, *Industrial Society in England towards the end of the Eighteenth Century* (2nd ed., 1965), pp. 65 ff.; J. L. and B. Hammond, *The Rise of Modern Industry* (1925), p. 67; E. W. Gilboy, 'Demand as a Factor in the Industrial Revolution', in *Facts and Factors in Economic History* (Cambridge, Mass., 1932), p. 639 ff. But curiously enough, Miss Deane, whose earlier work seemed to add so much force to the thesis here stated, seems to rely firmly on exports again, as do most of the Cambridge economists and historians, in her latest work, *The First Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge, 1965), esp. ch. 4 (hereafter referred to as *First Ind. Rev.*).

[2] Cf. D. E. C. Eversley, 'Population, Economy and Society', in Glass and Eversley, *Population in History* (1965), pp. 26 ff. Some eighteenth-century economists (e.g. R. Cantillon) believed that food could rarely be transported over a distance of more than ten miles, excluding, of course, water transport.

[3] This is not to imply that there was no national economy. There was specialization, and some products peculiar to one region were sold on most national markets. Many statistical series move in exact parallel, though actual levels differ widely at any one point of time.

Commodities were often classified in the past according to whether they were luxuries or necessities, and something of this distinction survives in recent discussions. It is claimed that a good deal of what was produced (or, which amounts to the same thing, bought from abroad with exports of home products) was for the wealthy sections of the community, and given great inequalities of income, these alone might account for most of the increase in production. But apart from the fact that the products in question were often far from being luxuries in any sense of the word, we need to remember that very few articles could be described with any confidence as being for the consumption of the rich only. Without giving this evidence any quantitative significance, we can cite a mass of contemporary sources alleging the prevalence of 'luxurious' habits amongst the 'poor'; a complaint, shorn of its moralizing overtones, which means nothing more than that some labourers liked tea with sugar even when both were heavily taxed; that women decked themselves out in clothes considered too good for them; and that in some cottages you might find a bit of carpet or even a piano.[1] What seems necessary for growth is that the very exceptional expenditure should become a little less so, that articles later to be described by Nassau Senior as 'decencies', half-way between luxuries and necessities, should spread through some more of the 'middling sorts of people', and that some labourers should take it into their heads so to misspend their income (according to their betters) as to go short of food and put themselves into debt for a looking-glass or a pair of gilt buckles for their Sunday shoes.

The wealthy household did, of course, play its part in increasing the scope even of the industrial market. Whilst the rich might have bought little for their personal use that was mass-produced, their households needed metal and textile manufactures, their servants needed dress and equipment and the building of their houses involved increasing consumption of glass, iron, lead, and brass.[2] To point to the consumption pattern of large and wealthy households, however, is not to weaken the theme of the mass market: inasmuch as much of what was bought was for servants, we need to look at the domestics as part of the total labour force, and if their real incomes rose and they lived a more civilized life at the expense of their masters, that is not so different from a similar change in the living pattern of a craftsman working for the big household at one remove, or another artisan whose clientèle might be amongst the *petite bourgoisie*.

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[1] On the meaning of the relative terms used at different times, see Eversley, *Social Theories of Fertility and the Malthusian Debate* (Oxford, 1959), pp. 89 ff.

[2] Cf. Witt Bowden, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

4 The Distribution of the National Income

To gain a better idea of the possible size of the new domestic markets created, we might start with some idea of national income distribution. What was the strength, in the middle of the eighteenth century, of that group of the inhabitants of the kingdom which was neither wealthy nor poor—the middle class, for the sake of brevity? Let us look again at Gregory King's famous table.[1] He assumed that there were over two and a half million people in his time in the category 'Increasing the Wealth of the Kingdom'. We can disregard the top ranks, down to the esquires, or those receiving more than £450 per annum, and we are still left with over 2.6 million people organized in households with a total income of £1 per week or more. Let us, to be on the safe side, assume that King exaggerated the incomes of the poorer freeholders and farmers, the craftsmen and artisans. If we counted only the 'persons in office', the clergy, the lawyers, the richer freeholders, the officers, etc., we still have a million people (including dependants) with incomes in the range £50–£400. Let us even exclude poor curates, pedlars, half-pay pensioners, and others unlikely to have much of a spending margin. But whichever way we look at it, we must believe that something like 10 per cent of the population were, in King's time, the nucleus of the home market. In actual fact, judging by the sort of wills we mention below, there must have been many in the class of artisans, lesser yeomen, and independant traders, publicans, and so on who were well within the 'spending group'. What the postulated growth of the home market implies is merely that this middling group should have increased in size, relatively as well as absolutely, and had a greater margin of expenditure above necessaries.

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[1] As reproduced in Charles Wilson, *England's Apprenticeship* (1965), p. 239, or Deane, *First Ind. Rev.*, pp. 8–9.

Can we estimate how much they spent? If we start again from Gregory King,[1] we have a total of nearly £10 m. p.a. spent on manufactures and the products of mining and building operations, or something like £10 for the average family. But we are not concerned with a hypothetical average family. If we exclude 80 per cent of the population on the grounds of poverty, the average spending of the remaining fifth becomes £35. This sum (after allowing for food and rent) does not seem incompatible with King's view of the structure of the group in question.

Let us assume that by 1800, when the total population was about 10 million, this same group numbered 2 million, and that another 10 per cent of the population (1 million) had been added by the process of industrialization and the growth of commerce. The growth of population and the economy would then have increased the size of the consuming group from 1 to 3 million. (We realize that this is a circular argument; it is put forward here only in order to provide a framework for later calculations.) If this group had exactly the same pattern of expenditure as their forerunners in King's time, and if prices had been constant (a not impossible assumption, though the 'basket' of goods is not constant), they should between them have purchased £30 m. worth of manufactures, etc. This happens to be what Arthur Young thought the value of the market was in 1770.[2] There are a lot of ifs and buts about this sort of play with figures, yet they provide us at least with some sort of dimension for the phenomenon that has to be explained. Let us put it in another way: if we do allow that 'industrial' output trebled between the end of the seventeenth and the end of the eighteenth century, and if exports of manufactures can only account for a small proportion of the total, and if the products known to have constituted the bulk of the output in 1800 were not of the type sold to the wealthy classes, what other construction can we put on the process than that the 'middle class' of consumers expanded?

In fact, the process of structural change in the market is much more complex than this simple model suggests. First of all, we have the phenomenon of urbanization and rural specialization, which involved an unknown proportion of the population in increasing dependence on the supply of consumer goods from commercial sources as opposed to their own or their neighbours' home-made product. Examples of this sort of thing would be clothing (change from home-spun and woven), and boots, beer, eating utensils to replace the wooden home-made article, candles instead of rush-lights, furniture, fuel, and even less obvious types of expenditure, e.g. patent medicines instead of local herbs and soap in the absence of a running stream.

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[1] P. Deane and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth 1688–1959* (Cambridge, 1962), has the best analysis of King's and subsequent national income estimates. See pp. 155 ff.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 156.

A much larger area for change in the expenditure pattern of any group of given real income levels arises from the change to cash wages and the urban environment. Many observers have noted the fact that urban and industrial wages were much higher than rural wages, and modern interpreters have dismissed this fact as unimportant, on the ground that the money differentials bear no relation to real wages: because in the country such a large part of total income was in kind, in food allowances, beer, rent, gardens, common rights, and so on, whereas in the towns everything had to be bought. This attitude towards the differentials tends to gloss over their significance for the structure of the market. Larger cash incomes inevitably mean more choice, and choice tends to move expenditure patterns away from the old essentials. Hence the complaints of the moralizers. In the country, so the assertions run, people had plenty to eat and a simple life.[1] If food was particularly cheap and abundant, they ate more or worked less. They neither saved, nor did they buy other things: they had all they knew or needed. But in the towns they developed a taste for new types of goods, apart from the fact that many commodities must now be purchased.[2] It was typical of the writers on the distress of the population at the end of the eighteenth century that they alleged misspending of incomes on inessential fripperies.[3] We need not ask here whether this was true or not as an explanation for distress: but we can say that if it was so, then the extension of the markets went even further downwards than we have assumed. If Ure's picture[4] of cottage equipment in industrial Lancashire has any significance, the process continued even through the worst years. We do not need to go as far as this: but the existence of the charge of misspending gives us a good lower limit to our description of the consuming classes.

[1] The tradition is perpetuated. Cf. R. Postgate's Preface to the *Good Food Guide*, 1965/6 ed., p. 10.

[2] Witt Bowden, *op. cit.*, p. 219.

[3] This runs like a refrain through works like Sir F. M. Eden's *The State of the Poor* (1797), I, Bk. II, ch. II: 'On the Diet . . . of the Labouring Classes'. He frequently quotes from the attempts of Count Rumford to improve the pattern.

[4] Andrew Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835).

There is a general point to add here which has some significance for total demand. If, as we assume, there is an element of re-distribution of the national income involved in the process of putting disposable cash into the hands of the ordinary consumer, we are entitled to believe that because of the higher propensity to consume attributed to the small income-earners, compared with the wealthier classes, the total effective demand for goods and services will therefore be relatively greater. It is not necessary, for the purpose of this analysis, to assume any real diminution in income for the upper ranges. There was not, as yet, much redistributive taxation (other than through the Poor Laws). It is enough to postulate that a larger part of a rising national income should go to the middle or even lower groups to justify the assumption that the propensity to consume will rise.

Nor is this view incompatible with the idea of increased savings: as the incomes of the bourgeoisie rise, this group can both demand more consumer goods and save more. What they cannot do is to emulate the luxurious habits of the really wealthy: but then, as we try to show, luxury consumption is little help to industrialization.

5 The Flow of Income

We now consider the whole question of how any considerable body of members of the 'middle' group of economically active people could have acquired and maintained a standard of real wages[1] high enough to sustain the prolonged demand which we postulate as the core of industrialization. We need to distinguish here between short-term and long-term factors. The situation in the 1730s and 1740s is not difficult to understand. There had been considerable losses of population during the periods of high mortality (1725–30 and 1741–2) in most parts of the British Isles. There was consequently a shortage of labour in many sectors. At the same time food prices were at their lowest level since the previous century. There is no difficulty about purchasing power here. A high demand for labour results merely from the attempt to sustain the previous level of activity: unless land goes out of cultivation, there will

[1] S. Pollard, 'Investment, Consumption and the Industrial Revolution', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XI (1958–9), p. 221, argues as many others do for a progressive decline from 1750, but this is not inconsistent with the view that the standard was higher than it had been in any previous age, or, on this interpretation, subsequently. But as we try to show, this decline is not compatible with production figures.

be some competition for labour. The effect of corn bounties has been disputed, but whether it was due to this subsidy or not, nobody now doubts that the level of agricultural output was well maintained. Exports remained steady or rose in some sectors; industrial production did not decline. (We remember that all this need not apply to every sector: it is enough that it should be true of some regions, so long as there is internal mobility. Regions of high labour demand keep up real wages to a level consistent with creating demand for consumer goods: poorer regions can only reduce this demand to zero; therefore we need only be interested in the areas of prosperity.)[1]

We now need to explain why this admittedly favourable situation continues after 1750, i.e. what long-term factors continue to operate when the exceptional demographic and climatic factors no longer apply. In the first place a closer examination of prices[2] shows that the higher prices of the period 1750–80 do not mean a return to the levels of before 1730, either in money terms or in real terms. There are many reasons for this. Although it is true that there were some bad seasons in these thirty years, the general run of meteorological observations[3] suggests that there were no excuses for famine prices. Secondly, the improvement in communications (roads, canals, coastwise shipping, river navigation) meant that it became progressively easier to iron out local shortages. (Though these had not in every case reduced total purchasing power very drastically, they must have had their effect precisely on that marginal class of consumer with which we are here most concerned, by re-distributing incomes in favour of producers and middlemen). There is now a considerable amount of evidence on the growth of a national food market during this period: so well organized in fact that prices in urban areas were often lower than in the countryside. We also know that wheat prices are not in themselves a good guide, or the only guide, to food prices as a whole. We find, for instance,[4] that malt prices do not rise as much as wheat prices. Wet seasons or very cold winters which injure one type of crop may benefit another.[1] Floods may increase the growth of herbage, hard frosts make the soil friable, dry summers can ripen and bring home one harvest whilst injuring beasts. The real test is whether the food situation got so desperate as to injure the demand for other goods. Many authorities also take the view that low prices are not in themselves necessary to promote high real wages—Young thought that high prices led to greater exertions to maintain a given standard.[2] That prices rose cannot be denied, but such a rise does not mean either that purchasing power fell or even that there were serious changes in demand to the detriment of the market for inessentials. No one living in the 1960s could doubt this, yet writers on the eighteenth century still tend to regard a period of rising prices as some sort of calamity. Given the conditions set out here we would argue that, as a result of the experiences of the previous decades, a large part of the population would seek to maintain in the face of increased difficulties the standards they had achieved, by combinations, by greater exertions, and if necessary by restricting fertility. And beyond that, it is still possible that they would go without some things we might consider essentials to keep the 'decencies'.

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[1] Cf. J. D. Gould, 'Agricultural Fluctuations and the English Economy in the Eighteenth Century', *Jour. Econ. Hist.*, XXII (1962), p. 318. For a good discussion of the demand for labour and its implications for wages and investment, cf. also Deane, *First Ind. Rev.*, pp. 134 ff.

[2] See below, pp. 240–3.

[3] See below, p. 244.

[4] The detailed prices of various cereals in relation to the foreign trade in these commodities need re-examination. For a good contemporary presentation, see Michael Combrune, *An Enquiry into Prices of Wheat, Malt . . . from the Year 1000 to the Year 1765* (1768), pp. 80 ff., for our period.

There is evidence that the price of many of these 'decencies' fell during the period under review. Others rose. There is not likely to be a universal explanation for this. On one hand, transportation costs were lowered in many instances. Mass production also played a part, as did the improved marketing methods in general. On the other hand, we need not exclude the possibility that in some years and in some markets the rise in food prices led to a temporary collapse of home consumption. If exports also suffered, this would explain the price fall. But if we then see that total production, in the long run, actually rose, the reduction in costs of production and distribution remains the only feasible explanation. The most important piece of evidence, however, will be the increased investment in productive capacity for those goods which were largely sold on the home market, and to the group of consumers we are discussing. This investment presupposes confidence in the long-term ability to purchase, and in itself, by leading to cost reductions, ensures the growth of the market.

Lastly, we need to consider the question of conscious manipulation of income levels. The whole of our hypothesis is undermined if we accept the view that wages tended to be at or very near minimum subsistence levels. We say 'undermined' rather than destroyed, because the incomes of many of the groups we have described are amenable to the same pressures as wages: craftsmen, small industrial producers working on their own account, farmers, shopkeepers, professional persons, can all to some extent fix their own level of incomes according to their costs and their view of what is reasonable. But even for the daily or weekly wage-earners there is little evidence that the labour market operated in such a way as to force them to accept wage reductions even when the price of food fell. Arthur Young did not believe that prices determined wages.[1] Cannan demonstrated long ago that Adam Smith came to abandon the view that the worker was always paid on the margin of survival.[2] The changing attitudes to labour demonstrated by Coats[3], the comparative laxness shown in Poor Law administration, and the great increase in charitable provision all add up to a picture inconsistent with the view of a whole working population perpetually kept on minimum rations.[4] Gilbert's act legalized existing practices.[5] Against the barbaric cruelties of some employers (though most examples in any case date from later than 1780) must be set the many instances of industrial employers known to have provided high standards of comfort at least for their skilled workers. Company provision of housing, piped water, instruction, and amusement are the industrial equivalent of wages in kind in the agricultural sector: with the difference that in the changed environment such benevolence (or self-interest) constitutes a demand for industrial products.[6]

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[1] Potato prices are a case in point. Unfortunately good series are difficult to obtain but there are some in Thorold Rogers, Beveridge, etc.

[2] A Young, *Eastern Tour* . . . (1771), IV, p. 319, and passim.

Once again, also, we need to point out that we are dealing with a regional model. The amount of internal migration which has been demonstrated[1] can only be explained in terms of a differential in opportunity and real wages (though that may have been in part imaginary). It is not necessary to suppose that the whole labour force, or even the whole of the skilled labour force, continued to have this margin over subsistence: it is enough for labour to have continued to be relatively short in some sectors in order to explain the continuation or growth of the market. The rapid growth of centres like Birmingham and the Black Country, of London, of the East Midlands, and of South Wales, all provide examples of areas of almost chronic labour shortages, where the difference between industrial wages and those paid in adjoining rural areas were much larger than can be explained in terms of additions to wages in kind. Moreover, the rate of population growth by natural increase before 1780 was much too small to lead to any permanent overstocking of the market: though the balance of births over deaths noticeably increased after about 1765, this did little to add to the available labour force before 1780.

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[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 312 ff.

[2] Edwin Cannan, *Theories of Production and Distribution* . . . (3rd ed., 1917), p. 233.

[3] A. W. Coats, 'Changing Attitudes to Labour in the Mid-Eighteenth Century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XI (1958), pp. 35 ff. This is an important article which almost makes one take it for granted that incomes in most cases were well above subsistence level.

[4] Cf. also J. D. Chambers, 'The Vale of Trent', Suppl. to *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, No. 3 (1957), pp. 57–58. Attitudes to labour are a complex product of philosophical outlook, economic necessity, and habits of work and leisure, as Professor Chambers pointed out in one of his characteristic letters after reading my earlier paper.

[5] The motives of the Poor Law authorities were of course also mixed—many profited from their own laxity. But squires took pride in well-fed labour and tenantry and were the first to attack the industrialists for starving their workers. There is a distinct lessening, towards the end of the eighteenth century, of the number of attacks on 'luxury', meaning some comforts for the poor.

[6] Cf. J. D. Chambers and G. E. Mingay, *The Agricultural Revolution 1750–1880* (1966), p. 112.

To sum up this part of the argument: starting with a relatively cheap food supply and a shortage of labour before 1750, we postulate the existence of a margin between income and expenditure on basic necessities. Between 1750 and 1780, this margin was not reduced, and in many cases, must have become larger: (i) because food prices did not rise sufficiently to cancel out the original benefit; (ii) because relative labour shortages continued in many areas and in respect of many skills; and (iii) because employers made no concerted or conscious attempt to reduce real wages to subsistence levels. In some cases, industrial paternalism increased the demand for consumer goods. As a result, the larger labour force contains more consumers for the products of industry than ever before.

6 The Extent of Exports

We shall now consider, in turn, four areas of evidence which have a bearing on the attempt to give greater precision to the general propositions we have sought to establish: the scope for exports, the industrial evidence as to the structure of the market, the agricultural sector, and the rate of population growth. Of these, exports probably present the least problem. The opinion that traditional accounts of the place of exports in the growth of the economy were exaggerated has been expressed at intervals ever since the cotton industry first came to prominence,[1] but on the other hand there has been a recent revival, partly through the popularity of the 'leading sector' theory, of the view that Britain's command of world markets was the real incentive to industrialization.[2] There is, however, no need for a single view of the problem. Nobody would deny that exports provided a large part of the total stimulus.[3] Moreover, most accounts are concerned with the main period of growth, after 1780, and there is no question at all that the foreign sector became increasingly more important with time. All we try to show here is that between 1750 and 1780, that is, when the foundations were laid, and many important advances made, the overseas market did not play a major role in providing the justification of expansion for the country as a whole. If for some sectors, and some areas, exports were already vitally important, this certainly was not known to those responsible for the conduct of other sectors. National preoccupations, as shown in parliamentary debates and legislation, were still with older sectors: the remnants of mercantilism sought to encourage industries which had little future. The rarity of any rational discussion of exports in the works of the economists before 1780, except in terms of the old staples or agricultural products, proves their ignorance rather than the absence of export sectors. But it also makes the operation of the leading sector rather obscure to follow.

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[1] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 106 ff.

Exports could be seen in three ways.[4] If it is true that the major part of the total increase in consumption in the country consisted of luxury foods and textiles, then exports can be seen only as stimuli to the demand for labour. We assume that the countries from which our imports originated obtained purchasing power which in turn gave employment to the producers of agricultural and industrial commodities, to workers in marine and commercial services. But even in this case the increase in foreign trade creates additional incomes at home. If, secondly, a proportion of the imports consisted of goods for the consumption of ordinary people (in the shape of tea, sugar, and tobacco), then existing additional home purchasing power has the effect of creating these imports, making possible exports in return, which then once more lead to increased incomes, thus setting up a cycle of growth. If, thirdly, a large part of imports consists of raw materials or semi-fabricates, these can only be required if the domestic demand is already in existence, from whatever class of incomes it proceeds, so that the increase in foreign trade can be seen as a link in a chain of home growth.[1]

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[1] T. S. Ashton, *An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century* (1955), p. 63. See also the quotation there from D. Macpherson's *Annals of Commerce* (1805): 'the people of Britain being the best customers to the manufacturers and traders of Britain'. Porter's *Progress of the Nation* (1st ed., 1836) also made this point at a time when exports were much more important.

[2] For a clear expression of this view, see K. Berrill, 'International Trade and the Rate of Economic Growth', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XII (1959–60), pp. 351 ff.

[3] In particular, critics of the home market thesis argue that the faster *rates* of foreign trade growth provided the more important stimulus, as did wars and the opportunities provided by the acquisition of colonies. But I do not see how these impulses can last if the total quantity involved remains very small.

[4] Cf. Gould, *op. cit.*, p. 318, and Deane, *First Ind. Rev.*, pp. 66 ff.

All three elements are present, and each makes a contribution. Conversely, the demand from other countries for our own exports, regarded in isolation from the pattern of imports, must be based on changes in demand structure overseas analogous to our own: in fact, since British exports tended for a long time to be much more prosaic than her imports, it is possible to argue that the growth of the 'ordinary' consumer abroad was also of importance to us.

So far we have omitted any reference to the terms of trade. Any of the three mechanisms just described can be restated as favourable changes in the terms of trade, except where inelasticities in the supply of imports prevent this. A discussion of the movement of the terms of trade in detail, however, is outside the scope of this paper, since we are not so much concerned with the reasons for the distribution between home and foreign trade as with the facts of the case.[2] However, it may be noted in passing (although on the statistics which will be presented it cannot really be deemed a very important point in our period) that at any given level of home demand, additional exports may make it possible to reduce production costs per unit, which may further enlarge the scope of the total market without affecting the terms of trade one way or another.

What, then, are the salient facts about exports? (See Table 1.) We may base ourselves, without further discussion of the validity of the

[1] William Enfield, *Essay towards the History of Leverpool* [sic] (1773), has an analysis of the composition of the trade through that port. This shows that although exports were largely of the expected industrial consumer goods, imports were either raw materials or goods clearly for the luxury trade, with the exception of sugar and tobacco, which might have had a wider market. (I owe this information to J. D. Marshall.)

[2] For a good discussion of the significance of the terms of trade in this context, see C. Kindleberger, 'Foreign Trade and Economic Growth', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XIV (1961–2), p. 290.

Table 1. British Exports 1740–99: Annual Average values
(all figures represent £ '000s except where otherwise stated)

	Domestic exports	All non-textiles	All iron	Nails (cwt.)	Glass	Lead	All textiles	Woollen only[1]	Cotton	Iron and cotton as % of all exports
1740–9	6,556	1,153	290	25	17	160	4,399	4,149	11	4.6
1750–9	7,748	1,521	408	32	42	151	5,805	5,311	85	6.2
1760–9	10,436	2,066	568	30	63	175	6,334	5,447	227	7.6
1770–4	10,030	2,335	766	37	74	179	6,526	5,347	239	10.0
1775–9	8,504	2,323	512	16	53	151	5,043	4,261	256	9.0
1780–9	10,190	2,848	613	17	59	175	5,710	4,250	756	13.4
1790–9	16,569	4,330	1,116	32	141	179	10,288	6,361	2,626	22.4

[1] Woollen: computed values, as in Schumpeter, Table XIII.

Source: Schumpeter, *English Overseas Trade Statistics* 1693–1808.

price levels underlying the statistics of value, on the tables published by Mrs. Schumpeter[1] and Deane and Cole.[2] The level of domestic exports achieved (annual averages) was just over £6.5 m. by 1740–9. It rose to a record of over £10 m. by 1760–9, and fell again to just over £9.2 m. by 1770–9. (Different authorities cite slightly different figures, but the effect is the same.) Taking Mrs. Schumpeter's Table II[3] (exports of English produce and manufactures only), we observe a first peak average of £9.1 m. p.a. in 1749–51, falling irregularly to a low point of £7.3 m. p.a. in 1779–81, and then climbing very steadily to reach an average of £20 m. at the turn of the century. These global figures conceal, of course, the changing structure of the export trade. In 1750 agricultural produce and fish still accounted for over £2 m. worth of exports; by 1780 this was little more than half a million pounds. Taking the principal industrial products, therefore, we expect to see a somewhat more marked trend towards increase, and Table 1 certainly shows important increases in the value of iron to a peak in 1774, followed by a fall to 1775–9, and the same is true in the case of glass, lead, and nails, with only tin increasing more or less steadily. But then all these non-textile industrial commodities together account for only about £1.5 m. p.a. round 1750, and at their peak to little more than £2 m. Textiles are clearly very much more important: at just on £5 m. p.a. *c.* 1750, rising to a plateau of over £6 m. by 1750–75, and falling again to £5 m. by 1775–9 before their spurt to the end of the century which formed the whole basis of Rostow's argument. But again these global figures must be broken down further in order to obtain the true picture of industrialization. Even at the pre-1780 peak, cotton was as yet an insignificant part of the whole: woollen exports came first, with an average value of between £5 m. and just over £5½ m., linen next with £400,000–£600,000, and cotton last with a mere £240,000, a figure which applies to the whole period 1760–80. These are all long-familiar facts, yet seen against the necessity to explain the continued growth of the whole economy from 1750 to 1780, they become significant. Above all, they need to be set against the sort of figures which belong to the 'take-off' period, which are altogether of a different order of magnitude.[1]

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[1] E. B. Schumpeter, *English Overseas Trade Statistics, 1697–1808* (Oxford, 1960); Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962). Perhaps this is the place to record the view that the publication of these three volumes transformed the arena of debate on economic growth in England by providing the first widely accessible quantitative basis.

[2] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, ch. II. Also in Deane, *First Ind. Rev.*, pp. 60 ff., for new empirical justifications for using the figures as published by Mrs. Schumpeter, at least for comparative purposes.

[3] *op. cit.*, p. 15.

We shall discuss the structure of the home market later, but at this point it is worth considering whether raw material import figures can shed any light on this situation. If we look at raw cotton imports, for which we have good quantitative series[2] we notice that by 1750 just over 2 m. lb. of cotton were imported, and that this figure was still the same by 1760. Remembering that the value of exports remained static over the next twenty years, we then note that the raw material imports rose to over 7 m. lb. before 1780 (having attained this figure already in 1777 and 1778). Unfortunately, we do not seem to have a good coefficient for the conversion of raw cotton quantities (or values) into finished values: there are too many variations in the mixtures of fibres, in the counts, and in the finishing of fabrics, including dyeing and printing, to obtain a useful conversion. But one thing stands out clearly even at this stage: if raw cotton imports, small as they were, rose more than threefold between 1750 and 1780, and if, as is claimed, the cotton industry was of some significance even by then, it looks as if the home market were of more significance than the static export market. (Another way of putting this is to point out that the ratio of cotton exports in 1795–9 to the average for 1775–9 was as 10:1 whereas raw material imports (quantities) were only 5:1, showing once more that the export markets became relatively much more important towards the end of the century.)

Naturally, if we do not deal with absolute figures but with relative increases (as historical statisticians have done since Hoffmann)[3] there are some rather startling changes to record even for the period under review. But we must beware of reading very much into these. For any one firm, or industry, clearly, a doubling of exports, from, say, £10,000 to £20,000 p.a., is an important event, stimulating investment and no doubt imitators. But such periods of sudden increase of opportunity for one or another section were familiar in English economic history since the Middle Ages. They seldom led to lasting growth. Therefore we must now turn to the home market to explain the real impetus given to industrial growth in the period 1750–80.

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[1] Compare Schumpeter's Tables VII, VIII, X, XII, XIV, XV, and XVI, with IX, XI, XIII, and XVII. Since the series are not continuous, the contrast between the earlier and the later period is not always quite so apparent.

[2] Schumpeter, *ibid.*, Table XVIII, p. 62. I do not know why Miss Deane (*First Ind. Rev.*, p. 60) claims that figures for raw cotton are not given in Mrs. Schumpeter's work. Surely 'Wool Cotton' means just that.

[3] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 78; W. Hoffmann, *British Industry, 1700–1950* (Oxford, 1955), esp. Table 54, which shows clearly how calculations of percentage changes distort rather than illuminate when one is dealing with non-comparable quantities.

7 Organization of the Home Market

Our information regarding the shape of the internal incomes and consumption structure in Great Britain in the eighteenth century is necessarily fragmentary, and we can only follow existing authorities into this difficult field. First, we remind ourselves again that we are dealing with a series of regional economies, and that we cannot expect incomes, or expenditure, to be equally distributed in proportion to the population. Not only was total income very different, but also its distribution as between groups. Miss Deane provides us with the following rough outline[1] (see Table 2). Allowing for all the doubts which such calculations naturally arouse, we arrive at a gross national product which rises two and a half times between the end of the seventeenth century and 1770 and then doubles again (in money terms) by 1811. During this time (and here we are on safer grounds) population rises by 35 per cent from the first to the second point, and is roughly double, in 1811, what it had been 120 years earlier. In money terms, therefore, income per head more than doubles. The sector with which we are here concerned (manufactures plus trade plus transport) accounted for less than a third of the GNP *c.* 1688, and perhaps half by 1811. Exports (as here valued) were roughly £5 m. in 1688, of which certainly less than £4 m. were home industrial products. This leaves something over £10 m. as the combined turnover of industry and trade (after allowing for exports f.o.b.) for the home market, or let us say £10 per notional household per annum. By 1770 the manufacturing commercial sector is estimated as being worth £43 m., and after allowing roughly £10 m. as the value of exports of goods of British origin, we have more than £30 m. available for the home market, or perhaps £25 per household. Prices, of course, cannot be compared, as between these two earlier dates, but

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[1] Based on Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, ch. V. In *First Ind. Rev.* Miss Deane convincingly demonstrates (p. 63) that exports were worth about £2. 0*s*. 0*d*. *per capita* in 1752–3 and had risen only to £2. 15*s*. 0*d*. *per capita* in 1797–8. Although this is to be taken at constant (1796–8) prices, this still seems an insignificant addition to national income. Using a slightly different basis of years, exports price indices, and population, one could produce a static *per capita* figure.

Table 2. The Composition of the National Income 1688–1812
(millions of pounds except where otherwise stated)

	Gross national product	Of which manufactures plus distribution and transport	Of which exports	Home market	Population (millions)	Households (Pop. ÷ 5) (millions)	Home consumption per household	Exports per head
							£ s. d.	£ s. d.
G. King (1688)	50	15.5	5.0	10.5	5.5	1.1	9 10 0	1 0 0
A. Young (1770)	128	43.0	9.5 (domestic)	34	7.0	1.4	25 0 0	1 7 0
Colquhoun (1812)	250	130	40	90	11.0	2.2	40 0 0	3 13 0

Source: Derived from Deane and Cole, *British Economic Growth.*

These figures are to be taken only as crude approximations.

for what it is worth Schumpeter's price index[1] shows that prices, if anything, fell in this period of more than eighty years.

If we now turn to the period 1770–1811, we find that the value of the industrial/commercial sector's output has gone up to about £130 m. (being by now more than half the national product.) Exports, though they exceeded £40 m. in most years after 1806 until about 1818, when they fell again,[2] still leave a larger amount *per capita* to be consumed at home—perhaps £90 m. all told, or nearly £40 per household. Price levels have risen, of course, though probably not by 100 per cent,[3] and perhaps the most that could be said would be that domestic demand is holding its own relatively, at a time of rapidly rising population and despite the severe hardships of the war and accelerating industrialization. The implications of this for the 'standard of living' debate[4] may be worked out by others. In any case from our point of view it is not relevant. The important factor rather seems to be the increase in *per capita* consumption of home products in the time of Arthur Young. This will be independent evidence: we adduce it here to show that Miss Deane's calculations are at least consistent with our own thesis, which now needs reinforcing with proofs of a quite different kind. But we may at this stage represent the long-term trend diagrammatically.[5] This simply illustrates the widening gap between exports and total production and trade, which must represent home consumption, and we also show consumption per household.

Some allowance also has to be made for the increased need for producer goods at a time of accelerating industrialization. Investment has to come out of that slice of the GNP which is, in our calculations, a residual. What that allowance should be would depend on one's view of the probable capital/output ratios obtaining in our period. We have not got the documentary evidence to generalize on this point, but in any case the argument is not affected. It is relevant for the standard of living debate to know how much of the residual went on ordinary consumer goods, and how much on capital goods, since the latter do not enter into the calculation of current real incomes. The fact is that either kind of expenditure would creater further domestic incomes, act as a stimulus to industrial production, and form an integral part of the accelerator mechanism.

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[1] E. B. Schumpeter, 'English Prices and Public Finance', *Review of Economic Statistics* (1938), as quoted in Deane and Cole, and Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*

[2] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 282.

[3] Cf. diagram at end of Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*

[4] E. J. Hobsbawm and R. M. Hartwell, 'The Standard of Living during the Industrial Revolution: A Discussion', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVI (1963), pp. 149 ff.

[5] Cf. Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 81, and Diagram I herein.

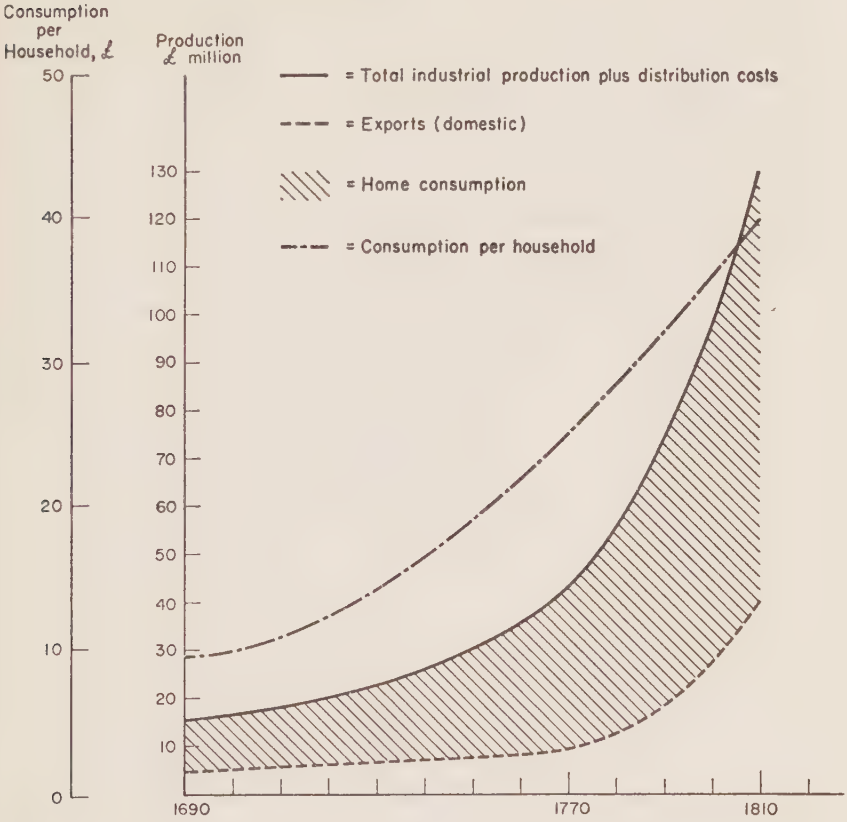

Diagram I. The Home Consumption Gap

We are now postulating the existence of a large and increasing difference between total industrial output (plus the inland trade which distributed commodities) and exports, constituting home demand. In our notional calculations we have used the idea of consumption by each household unit. Clearly, it is not possible that anything like such an average was attained by the majority of households. On the other hand, it is equally unlikely that all this extra consumption went only to the top layers of the income structure. Theoretically, of course, the top

10 per cent of all incomes could have accounted for 90 per cent of the national income. In 1770, 140,000 households could have shared £110 m. (or about £800 each), and the other 1,260,000 households shared £18 m.—i.e. £15 p.a. each. That this is unlikely may be demonstrated in two different ways. First, we recall Gregory King's structure of socio-economic classes at the end of the seventeenth century,[1] and secondly, and rather more compellingly, we may look at the composition of domestic output to ask ourselves how likely it is that a small

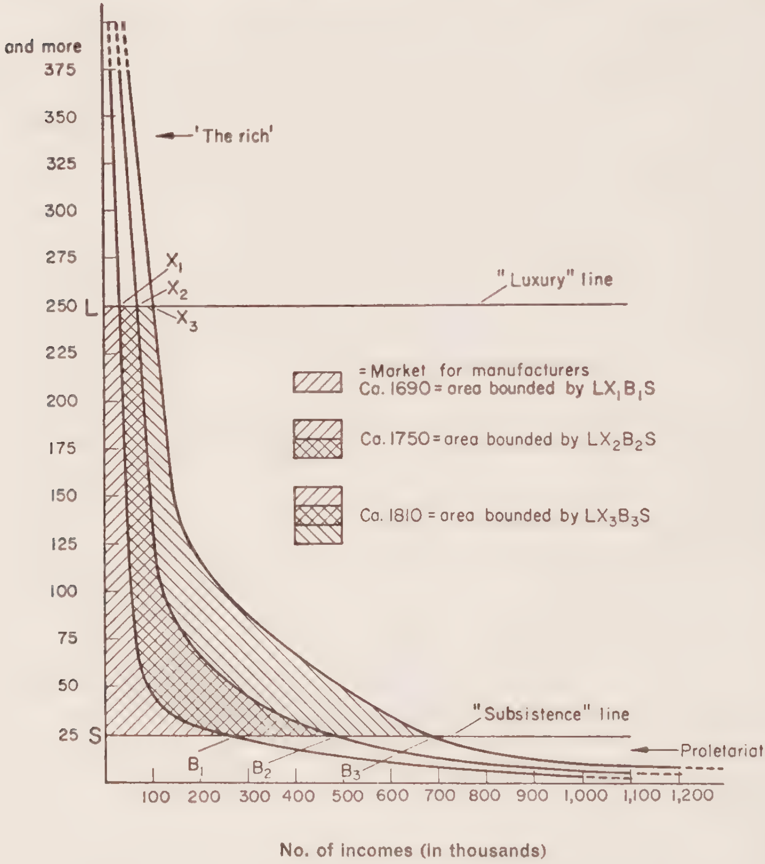

Diagram II. Hypothetical Income Distributions, 1690–1810 minority of households increased its consumption of the commodities involved on such a scale.

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[1] See above p. 213.

Let us return to the position of our group of 'middling consumers' in King's table of classes. It may be re-defined as being neither on the subsistence line nor rich. The diagram (II) shows a hypothetical income distribution before the process of creating middle incomes begins—with a few rich people and a lot of poor. Then there begins to be a bulge which we show at two successive stages. It will be argued that rising national income could benefit the wealthy greatly, and yet leave room for this new middle class, even without ever touching the poor about whom laments continue. This diagram also introduces two theoretical lines which may help to clarify the argument. The upper 'cut-off' line L–X denotes the luxury line: everything that is spent above this level is deemed to go on exotic imports, personal services, the products of goldsmiths and bookbinders. Everything below the line S–B we may term 'bread', i.e. minimum subsistence, including elementary shelter and clothing. It is in between the two lines that we find expenditure on industrial commodities, less essential foods, services, transport, etc. (This ignores savings which are likely to come more out of the area above LX than out of LXBS.) It will be seen that a doubling of the national income, with this sort of distribution, could more than double the amount spent on manufactured commodities, etc.

8 Indicators of New Activity

Let us now review the factual evidence available to support the contentions made. What indicators are there of increased activity during the period 1750–80? It would be disingenuous to begin by quoting Ashton and others for the belief that 1760 is a good starting date for the Industrial Revolution as such. But the reason for their choice was that, from their intimate knowledge of industrial records, it was clear that the quickening of the pace in so many industries occurred round about that date. One of the striking basic changes is in the rate of construction of new and improved means of communication. The history of the English canal network is too well known to require rehearsal here: suffice it to say that apart from the early Lancashire canals, the main Midland canal network was complete or under construction by 1780 and primarily served the needs of inland trade. The rise of the Potteries, to which we shall refer again later, is the prime example, but the Black

Country and Birmingham also benefited largely from these developments.[1] It is true that the Grand Trunk and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canals, as well as the various navigations linking Liverpool to Manchester and other parts of the port's hinterland, were used to reach the sea: but this was as much connected with coastwise shipping, and the needs of the fast-growing port towns themselves, as with exports. Above all, the canals carried food for inland consumption and therefore served as a stimulus to demand since they helped to reduce the price of food just as they brought down the price of coal in places like Manchester or Birmingham.

Similarly, there were considerable improvements in road-building during the same period. The passing of the Turnpike Act of 1772 comes both as a culmination of several years of increasing pressure on parliamentary time owing to road legislation and as the start of a new spurt in building. The 1770s saw significant accelerations in road transit times, in the regularity and reliability of coach services,[2] as well as cost reductions, absolute or relative. The effect of this on the inland market is obvious, through the speed-up of mails, the increase in commercial travelling,[3] and the aid to the creation of larger regional markets.[4] At the same time, of course, the demand for roads comes from those who have reason to believe they will benefit.[5] In fact, all the arguments which Professor John adduces for the earlier epoch[6] apply *a fortiori* in our period.

Our next type of evidence comes from the history of enterprises themselves. To take only a few of the famous names in British industrial history whose firms were either founded in the period 1750–80 or first achieved prominence then: Arkwright, Boulton, Bramah, Crawshay,

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[1] W. T. Jackman, *The Development of Transportation in Modern England* (2nd ed., 1962), p. 366.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 686 ff.

[3] Cf. G. W. Daniels, *The Early English Cotton Industry* (Manchester, 1920), pp. 64–65, for the activities of the Manchester Riders, 'The Society of Travelling Scotchmen of Bridgnorth', etc. (*c.* 1780).

[4] This is not to imply that these regional markets were created by transport. They had existed in the seventeenth century. It is rather a question of scale and regularity, reliability, predictability.

[5] This is best studied with the help of the agricultural surveys of the time of Arthur Young and Sir John Sinclair, from which one can see the sequence of promotion of turnpikes. See R. Gaut, *A History of Worcestershire Agriculture* (Worcester, 1939). The Chances of Bromsgrove (later glassmakers) helped to promote the turnpike which linked the iron centre of Dudley with the main nail-making centres, and so on.

[6] In *Jour. Econ. Hist., loc. cit.* pp. 27–28.

Dundonald, Garbett, Keir, Reynolds, Roebuck, Strutt, Sam. Walker, Wedgwood, and Wilkinson[1] all flourished in this period which is supposed to have seen a slowing down of the pace of expansion. It is the period of the most important improvements in the steam engine, of the widespread adoption of coke smelting in the iron industry, as well as perhaps the most significant in the history of technology in general.

Did these entrepreneurs then produce mainly for export—or even to any large extent? This is an important question, since if there is anything in the 'leading sector' argument, it operates surely at the personal level; that is, the stimulus to investment comes precisely through the best-known entrepreneurs in their time, even if they do not account for the largest part of the total output. Here, quite clearly, we can see the predominance of the home market. None of the men mentioned were active in woollens, the largest export industry of the time. Some of them only produced raw materials or semi-fabricates, and we cannot be certain of the ultimate destination of their output, but people like Boulton, Reynolds (Coalbrookdale), and Keir were definitely only marginal exporters. Wedgwood may serve as a prime example, because the legend of the Wedgwood exports is widespread. It is of long standing and was perhaps perpetuated by Mantoux,[2] who based his assertion on the annual export from Burslem of 550,000 'articles'. But total official export values in the 'glass and pottery group' were only of the order of £20,000 before 1780. Official valuations are much too low when it comes to fine porcelain, but this was not a significant part of total output. The number of 'pieces' involved was, in fact, eight million, so that each item is valued at less than one penny. All this can only have constituted a very small fraction of the business of the Potteries. Wedgwood's share in all this has been well described by Mr. McKendrick,[3] and we need only add here that Wedgwood did indeed count much on the prestige of his exports, such as the dinner services for foreign potentates; but they cannot have made him rich, especially since he was often not paid (or meant to be paid) by his noble clients. Wedgwood made his considerable fortune from very common articles indeed.[4] He may have ostentatiously broken a plate which was not up to his declared standards, but he flooded the domestic market with 'seconds'—plates which sold at 2*s.* or 3*s.* a dozen. In any case, his chief export business did not develop until after 1775. We cite this case because it particularly illustrates the necessity of an expanding home market as a basis for exports. First of all, the home market could absorb stocks if exports ceased or diminished. Secondly, it provided the foundation for mass production, so that the cost per unit could be reduced to levels which made it feasible to export articles with a relatively unfavourable weight/value ratio, like pottery. Thirdly, it provided an outlet for the inevitable sub-standard qualities (this applies particularly to pottery, glass, and dyed and printed textiles).

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[1] These are taken in alphabetical order from Everett Hagen, *On the Theory of Social Change* (Homewood, Ill., 1962), pp. 305–8. His complete list is worth studying: one should construct a sort of centre of gravity of the working lives of all the characters he lists.

[2] See P. Mantoux, *The Industrial Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (new ed., 1961), pp. 386 ff.

[3] In *Econ. Hist. Rev.* 2nd ser., XII (1959–60), pp. 408 ff.

[4] Cf. E. Meteyard, *The Life of Josiah Wedgwood* (1865), I, pp. 191 ff.

At the same time, as the case of Wedgwood again illustrates, we are dealing here with commodities which typically find a ready sale in the sector to which our diagram has drawn attention: below the luxury class, above the range of mere subsistence. Glass shows a similar record. The statistics of duties paid[1] point to an annual consumption of 113,000 cwt. before 1780. That represents about 11 m. square feet of glass, worth at least £1 per cwt., and a great deal more for better varieties. But until the big upwards move in 1796 only about 10 per cent of the volume of glass produced was exported—and a good deal of this was of the best type which paid for transportation costs. Even in the days of window tax, therefore, we must reckon that 10 m. square feet of glass were sold at home.[2] A great deal of this was third, fourth, and fifth grade, as the glass makers reckoned it (only a tiny proportion of all glass was perfect: a large part of the crown glass made consisted of the 'bull's eye' which became a sought-after commodity only in the twentieth century and was considered waste in the eighteenth, yet glass makers relied on a ready sale to keep the cost of their product low). Even allowing for the building of many royal and noble palaces, we cannot doubt that the greater part of the output must have gone to our new class of consumers: those who did not stuff their windows with rags on one hand, but could not afford plate glass or clear panes for their leaded windows on the other.

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[1] From T. S. Ashton, *Economic Fluctuations in England, 1700–1800* (Oxford, 1959), Appendix; Mitchell, *op. cit.*, p. 267, and T. C. Barker, *Pilkington Bros. and the Glass Industry* (1960), pp. 52–53. The statistics are difficult to interpret, but the text given here seems to follow from the figures.

[2] Dr. Marshall has calculated that 20,000 houses per annum, window tax or not, would use up that much glass by themselves, allowing a little for repairs, at £2. 0*s.* 0*d.* per house.

We have not space to pursue this argument in detail, but it can be shown that for most other commodities the story was the same. Later historians were too much under the influence of what happened in the war years to notice the break that had come just before the war. That the Midlands nailing industry was export-orientated was widely believed as the result of Thomas Attwood's impassioned appeals to the Select Committee of the House of Commons investigating the effects of the Orders in Council in 1812.[1] Yet some simple statistical checks show that the number of nailers necessary to produce the quantity exported to the United States before the embargo would not have kept more than a small fraction of those Attwood cited as unemployed working at their forges. If there were, all told, as many as he claimed, it would only mean that a very small minority was working for exports. *A fortiori*, the 1,700 tons per annum which represented the peak in the export business before 1780 would (depending on the number of nails per cwt.) keep only a few hundred domestic nailers busy. On the other hand, there is every indication that the building booms of the period[2] would by themselves account for most of the increasing output of the industries producing domestic hardware and ironmongery. Ashton describes[3] the great boom of the late 1770s; this collapsed after 1778, but the cessation of new orders would mean no immediate reduction in the output of materials required for finishing. Further, although the exports of hardware and nails decreased sharply during the American War of Independence, total production does not seem to have suffered—at least so far as the Midlands records go.

In general, such production figures as we possess for British industry show very little sign of any slackening of the growth of output during the years 1750–80, despite the fickleness of all markets. All statistics suffer from imperfections. Thus, Hulme's well-known series of figures[4] relating to iron production have been examined by Dr. Flinn,[5] and he has shown that the earlier statistics are overweighted in favour of returns from declining areas, as well as being compiled to prove specific points.[6] Unfortunately it is precisely for our period that we lack specific estimates, but there is now little dispute about the fact that the output of pig-iron, which had been round about 20,000–25,000 tons in 1720, reached about three times that quantity before the French wars began to provide fresh stimuli, and the history of enterprises clearly shows that the greater part of that increase falls into the period between 1760 and 1780. Yet the total weight of iron products exported (not necessarily consisting of 100 per cent iron) did not exceed 21,000 tons in any year before the drop of the 1770s,[1] and was less than 10,000 tons in fifteen out of the thirty years.

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[1] Cf. my more detailed account of this in *Victoria History of the Counties of England, Warwickshire* VII (City of Birmingham) (Oxford, 1963), pp. 97, 117.

[2] Ashton, *Fluctuations, op. cit.* pp. 98 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

[4] E. W. Hulme, 'Statistical History of the Iron Trade of England and Wales, 1717–1750', *Trans. Newcomen Soc.*, IX (1928–9), pp. 12–35.

[5] M. W. Flinn, 'The Growth of the English Iron Industry', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser. (1958–9), pp. 144 ff.

[6] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

If one examines the carefully compiled series now available in the *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* by Mitchell and Deane, one can only say that most of them show a more or less marked acceleration of expansion during the period 1750–80, and that where there are details, expansion continues during the export slump in the 1770s.[2] Although it would be unwise to construct a general index of production from such scanty sources, the general trend is unmistakable, and read in conjunction with the export figures, gives us a large increase in *per capita* production and consumption in the period 1750–80. (We return below to the special question of the behaviour of these series in the period 1770–80.)

Yet another way of looking at this question is to pursue the question of innovation.[3] Dr. Hartwell and others have argued cogently for the idea that the rate of innovation is a good measure of the existence of a free and progressing society. We have been warned against taking the patents of invention too seriously as a source in earlier periods,[4] but in the middle and later eighteenth century no important changes in practice occurred which would invalidate the series.[5] On this evidence alone, the number of patents sealed had been about eighty in the period 1740–9, rose to over 100 in the following decade, and to nearly 300 in the decade before 1780. This is quite in accord with what we know about industrial enterprises. As we know, many of the most important innovations were not patented when they were introduced. Nevertheless it is inconceivable that the desire to record patents is separable from the idea that the invention may be useful, or indeed from the effort to search for new methods most noticeable in a time of high economic activity.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 144, Schumpeter, *op. cit.*, Tables VII and IX.

[2] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.* Coal, p. 110, from Newcastle and Sunderland; coal into London, p. 112; export slump, p. 120; copper, p. 156; printed goods charged with duty, p. 184; cloths from the West Riding, p. 189 (striking increase in view of fall in exports); similarly with linen stamped in Scotland, p. 200; imports of raw silk in relation to silk exports, pp. 205–9, showing a normal relationship of ten times as much raw silk and thrown silk imported as silk goods exported (even allowing for waste this is considerable, especially considering also mixtures); tallow candles, p. 262; paper, p. 263; starch, p. 264; soap, *ibid.*, etc.

[3] Hartwell, *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, XVIII, p. 175.

[4] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 244; cf. also Deane, *First Ind. Rev.*, p. 128.

[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 268–9.

Lastly, under this heading, we cite some evidence from the Midlands to bear out the general contention.

Our knowledge of the goods retailed in eighteenth-century England is fragmentary, but much light has been thrown on the changing pattern of consumption by the surviving inventories of wills proved in the courts of the time. No systematic analysis of these seems as yet to have been made, but there are some useful series affording scope for comparison. Thus Sedgley, in Staffordshire, a town with a good deal of mining and industry, but also significant farming until the nineteenth century, had a manorial court with limited probate jurisdiction until 1857.[1] Unfortunately wills are rare after 1730, but even by this time there is plenty of evidence that ordinary industrial workers (in this case people working on their own account) did own specimens of the products of neighbouring and even distant industries. The inventories show that few of these people were wealthy, though a single 'gentleman' of Ettingshall near-by had his personal estate proved at just under £400: the average for the eighteenth-century wills is under £100.

But even Richard Wainwright, nailer, in an inventory sworn on 27 August 1739, had the little decencies of life: fire shovel, coal hammer, toasting iron, house bellows, a copper can, wooden furniture, a tun dish, scissors, a warming pan, a brass kettle, two iron pots, one pail, a search (sieve), two old candlesticks, glass bottles and earthenware, linen of all sorts in a chamber, a pair of bedsteads, a 'coverlid', a rug, a blanket, a kneading tub, two barrels, two coffers, a box, some trenchers, pewter, a brass skimmer, a brass basting spoon, an iron flesh fork, a tin calender, and so on. A poor man indeed, worth less than £10, and indeed none who figure in the Sedgley annals had less than Richard. By 1782, John Atwood of Coseley, proved at just over £20, had a clock and case, four brass pans, table linen, and books valued at £1 5*s*. A victualler had possessions valued at £284, yet he is well below the ranks of the gentry, the big tenant farmers, or the early industrialists. Even if one does not have detailed knowledge of the exact description of his goods, one recognizes amongst them immediately, for instance, the common products of Coalbrookdale, a few miles away, which can still be seen there in the museum today. (In these particular lists the description 'Dale' occurs several times.) Predominantly, these are cast- and wrought-iron goods, brass, copper, tin products as well as wooden utensils with metal facings, handles, and so on. Increasingly, there are textiles, in the shape of blankets, linens, pillows in their ticking, rugs, curtains, and cloths.[1] There is evidence of much glass (in the case of the victualler, this has replaced pewter for drinking, though there are still plenty of pewter plates as well as china ones). Inspection of many other wills of the dioceses of Lichfield and Worcester during this century confirms the general impression that the number of people possessing goods they must have bought in their lifetime, rather than inherited, grows steadily. From the point of view of industrial production this is crucial. Mere inheritance, the passing on of wearing apparel and daily linen, of utensils and furniture, could mean, at the margin, little demand. But the new products are striking. Moreover, the total of households is clearly on the increase, especially as the number of people reaching adult age must have been a record by the last third of the eighteenth century, judging by the survivors of 1821.

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[1] J. S. Roper, *Sedgley Probate Inventories*, privately published (Dudley, 1965), p. i. Wainwright's inventory, No. 130.

Perusal of the catalogues of Birmingham firms of the second half of the eighteenth century clearly demonstrates their home-market orientation.[2] Although there were also many exporters, and a number of foreign firms had settled in the city as merchants, the surviving ledgers and correspondence demonstrate the small part played by direct overseas customers or the factor and wholesale merchants in the ports. One cannot be certain of the destination in each case, but one of the chief characteristics of the trade is in the mass of articles of relatively low value which would hardly pay for transporting to distant markets, except for the rather specialized goods used in the African trades (like guns which exploded when fired, mirrors, and beads).

In Birmingham, too, we can observe in detail the buoyancy of industrial wages, which constitute at once a proof of the increasing volume of trade even when exports are low, and provide another link in the cycle of growing supply and demand. Many commentators go on to show that these high industrial earnings also forced up agricultural wages in the vicinity[1] and thus once again added to purchasing power. We have the evidence of much contemporary unfavourable, or in some cases approving, comment to the effect that even the most ordinary people in the streets sported the Birmingham-made fashion—the buckle, and then the ornamental button, the snuff-box and the chain.

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[1] Cf. Daniels, *loc. cit.*, and A. P. Wadsworth and J. de L. Mann, *The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire* (Manchester 1931), pp. 238 ff., for systems of distribution.

[2] See Eversley, in *V.C.H. Warks.*, VII, pp. 91, 92, 101, 112, and *passim*.

We sum up this section by repeating that what we have tried to show need only apply to a fraction of the total population. If the new standards of consumption were widespread in Birmingham, they may have been unknown amongst South Wales iron-workers or Wiltshire farm labourers. The existence of generations of consumers does not mean that there were not years when few could buy anything except basic necessities. But it seems clear that for most of the time, and for much of the country, we have no difficulty in establishing the existence of a broadly based home market.

Finally we must once again remind ourselves that the mechanism described here depends on a most delicate balance of factors. Though, on our evidence, this is how the extra purchasing power was created, and how the demands were met, there is no law of nature that this must be so, or that the sequence of events forms part of an equilibrium growth situation. At any point of time the process could have been halted. Additional labour (from spare rural capacity rather than a high rate of natural increase) might not have been forthcoming at the right time and in the right place. Innovations might not have been made or adopted to ensure that output could be raised at steady or lower prices. Increments in output of a speculative kind might not have found markets at home (thanks to a reasonable distribution of incomes and a better transport system), or abroad (thanks to expanding trading horizons). In each case the impetus would have been lost.

Nor can we list here all the 'environmental' conditions for economic growth—by now we take these for granted. An equable climate, political stability, the liberty of the individual, the 'protestant ethic', the absence of heavy expenditure on defence or royal extravagances—all the favourite pre-conditions for growth are present. This background makes the process possible, though it does not ensure it. If the social and political climate of Britain in 1750 provides the necessary conditions, home demand is the main element of the sufficient cause.

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[1] Witt Bowden, *op. cit.*, p. 255; Eden, *op. cit.*, II p. 739, from Arthur Young.

9 Food Prices and Home Consumption

We need now to investigate rather more deeply the causes of this buoyancy of the home market. For the earlier period 1720–50 John ascribed it largely to the relatively favourable movements in agricultural prices.[1] To repeat the argument: it is now generally believed that the low prices of corn in particular between 1730–50 had beneficial effects on the economy as a whole: it is now doubted whether the 'depression', which had previously been seen through the eyes of those interests which suffered from low produce prices, really did exist, and that whatever purchasing power may have been lost because some farmers or landlords found food production less profitable, was more than made up by the new margin of expenditure available to the growing non-agrarian sector.[2] With all this one cannot quarrel. But then, according to this school of thought, prices rose after 1750: this benefited the farming community, but depressed the living standards of the industrial population, and this is the cause of the slump. (It is logical, of course, that if one does not think that the loss of purchasing power of farmers was significant before 1750, one allows that the return to their prosperity later had no very great positive effects, especially as they were relatively less numerous.)[3]

The exact relationship between food prices and economic growth has been systematically studied by Mr. Gould.[4] Let us here briefly summarize the conditions which need to be fulfilled for low grain prices to have positive effects on home demand (leaving out the export effects, since we have already discounted the importance of the foreign market):

(*a*) farm incomes must be a relatively unimportant part of the total national income, or a reduction in profits must leave the demand of the agrarian sector unaffected (e.g. because most of the incomes involved were those of owners or large tenants or corn merchants who even in bad years would not be at subsistence level);

(*b*) the low food prices on the wholesale markets must be passed on to the ultimate consumer, at least in large measure;

[1] John, *Jour. Econ. Hist.*, 1965, p. 32, and *passim.*

[2] Chambers and Mingay, *op. cit.*, ch. I.

[3] H. J. Habakkuk, 'The Eighteenth Century', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., VIII (1955–6), pp. 437–8.

[4] Gould, *loc. cit.*, pp. 329 ff.

(*c*) wages must be inelastic in a downward direction: i.e. not firmly tied to the prevailing price of bread;

(*d*) any savings on minimum subsistence must be expended on other commodities. (It may, of course, be that if grain is cheap there is merely an increased demand for other foodstuffs, so that their price rises and there is still no margin for other purchases.)[1]

First, we need to look at grain prices to see what, in fact, happened to them in the thirty years after 1750. In the most recent comparative series, all admittedly from the south of England,[2] we certainly see no drastic increase during this period. Wheat exceeded 40*s*. a quarter only once in the period 1730–50, and did so regularly after that date: but it only surpassed 50*s*., in at least two of the three markets, on four occasions in the next thirty years. To compare an average level of under 45*s*. with the prices of the end of the century is not justified. Barley and oats follow much the same line and wool prices are equally steady.[3] The Gilboy prices indices,[4] whilst clearly demonstrating the exceptional *baisse* of the thirties and forties, also show that the consumers' price index on the basis of 1700 = 100 did not rise above 110 before 1780. But cereals alone are clearly rising faster than other commodities, thus rather discounting the theory that lower cereal prices drive up the price of everything else.

The question of real wages has received much attention from E. E. Gilboy and more recently from E. H. Phelps-Brown and Sheila Hopkins.[5] Unfortunately most of the continuous series published are based on wages paid by institutional employers, and refer to day labourers. But an increasingly high proportion of workers (especially in textiles, coal, and the metal industries) were paid by piece rates and their earnings are hard to ascertain.[6] Moreover, even time payments were much distorted, in the eighteenth century, by wages in kind and allowances on one hand, and the truck system on the other. In any case, the evidence is contradictory, so that, for instance, the Gilboy index for Lancashire shows considerable gains in real wages,[1] rising to 185 (1700 = 100) in 1769, whereas for London the record is much worse. Phelps-Brown's records based on the building trades sometimes show falls when the Gilboy index rises.[2]

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[1] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–65: a striking demonstration of the probability of steady consumption of grain per head during the eighteenth century.

[2] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 486.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 496.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 460 ff.

[5] E. H. Phelps-Brown and Sheila Hopkins, 'Seven Centuries of the Prices of Consumables, compared with Builders' Wage Rates', *Economica*, N.S., XXIII (1956), pp. 296 ff.

[6] Professor Ashton has kindly warned me against time rates and has given me abundant material to support his point. For some instances, see his *Economic History of England*, pp. 60–61. I still think there is *some* validity in the long series of time rates.

For what the fragmentary evidence is worth, then, it tends to show that wages were slightly more inelastic downwards than upwards: that is to say, incomes lagged behind prices at all times, but they were not so much depressed by low prices as they were raised by high ones, and the higher prices rose towards the end of the century, the faster incomes rose, until they were tied to food by the Speenhamland system.[3] Arthur Young was perhaps the only contemporary observer who really did look at prices and incomes in various areas in detail, and it was his opinion that real wages had risen. In his average for twenty years he thought that the price of labour had risen 25 per cent, and the price of wheat and malt had fallen.[4] But these averages are misleading, as are all national indices, and as we have stated, there is no need for all real wages to have risen. We can be certain at least that some real wages rose, and that this rise was greatest in areas like Lancashire where the industrial opportunities were greatest. We must not forget that so much of what industry produces is sold back to the local workers themselves.[5] A record of wheat prices paid in Birmingham (and directly relevant to the standard of living of the urban industrial consumer, unlike some of the series quoted earlier), compiled by Dr. J. M. Martin, shows the same facts equally strikingly.[6] We have, of course, by 1780 a national grain market, with nothing like the differences in local prices which were sometimes observed before the days of the canals.[7] Prices of round about 3*s.* per bushel had been common before 1750. There were temporary shortages in 1756, 1757, and 1758, but in 1761 the price was again 3*s.* 2*d.* From then until 1781 there was a long-term rise, and something between 5*s.* and 6*s.* was the median, taking summer and winter prices together. This, if one likes, is a doubling of the level of the 1730s—but it certainly is no great increase, if any, on the prices of the early part of the century. Seen in relation to what we know of Birmingham artisans' wages, even the figure of 6*s.* probably means no reduction in purchasing power compared with the years before 1750 (which were, industrially, nothing like as booming as the later period). At any rate, Birmingham records[1] carry few complaints of corn prices, except in really acute crises like the winter of 1772. We may readily believe that during these stringent months purchases of non-necessities declined, but that is not at issue.[2]

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[1] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, pp. 460 ff.

[2] The Phelps-Brown 'highs' are 1736, the late 40's to 1756, 1759–63, and 1776–82. Gilboy's Lancashire real wages are high in 1732–5, 1743–4, 1761, 1768–70, and 1776–9.

[3] See below, p. 246.

[4] Young, *op. cit.*, IV, pp. 344 ff.

[5] We remind ourselves that wages were most buoyant precisely in the growth industries and areas which had to, and did, attract migrants. Their local purchasing power is important, especially since they may be assumed to have had low dependency ratios.

[6] Unpublished private communication, but see also Dr. Martin's Ph.D. thesis, *Warwickshire and the Parliamentary Enclosure Movement* (Birmingham, 1965), which, like his earlier M.Com. thesis, throws a lot of light on the structure of the eighteenth-century grain market. See Table III.

[7] Chambers and Mingay, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

Given, then, the fact that produce prices remained reasonable, to what may this be attributed? Generally speaking, two factors are at work: good harvests and increased efficiency. The good harvests (due mainly to good weather) are the Cleopatra's nose of the whole situation: the one completely extraneous and fortuitous factor unconnected

Table 3. Grain Prices—High and Low 1752–80 (per quarter)[3]

		Ashton/Windsor			Martin/Birmingham	
		s.	*d.*		*s.*	*d.*
	1752	42	0		36	0
High	1757	52	0		56	0
Low	1761	30	6		28	0
High	1767	58	0		64	0
Low	1769	44	6	(1770)	44	0
High	1772	52	0		57	6
Low	1779	40	0		42	8

For sources see text and notes.

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[1] J. A. Langford, *A Century of Birmingham Life* (Birmingham, 1868), I, which is a conscientious summary of local news from the most important Birmingham paper.

[2] Chambers and Mingay, *op. cit.*, pp. 111–12.

[3] All these prices must be handled with great care, as there are a great many local, seasonal, and qualitative variations. The compilers of the series quoted here have been insistent on their restricted value.

with economic development, a true gift of God. The 1730s remain the most striking manifestation of this: but our later period is still one of remarkably favourable climatic conditions.[1]

The keeping of systematic weather records does not begin till much later, and again there are regional variations, but the available summaries[2] only show up the expected pattern. In 1756 there was a wet spring, and the 'wettest summer in memory of man'.[3] But this bad year was followed by five very good ones. 1762 was bad again, the next three years were good. 1766 was very wet and caused all sorts of losses apart from a bad grain harvest, 1767 was good. Then follows the one period which has given the whole second half of the century a bad name, 1768–73, but the rest of the seventies was good. These widely authenticated climatic facts are faithfully reflected in the price series, as they are in the records of declining exports of corn and subsequent imports. By 1767 rather large quantities of foreign food could be brought in at fairly short notice[4]—in that year nearly half a million quarters were brought in, a record until 1783. Since as late as 1763 exports were little less than that, we can say that in this period the available 'reserve range' of wheat alone was of the order of a million quarters. This means that good harvests are useful in keeping prices low, but they are nothing like as essential as they are in a situation of total dependence on home-grown food, and in the absence of export markets which provide an outlet for the surplus the farmer must be encouraged to grow in order to supply the home market adequately even in years of bad harvests.

Summing up on this score, we can say that although there were nine or ten wet years out of thirty, we have to characterize the supply situation as perfectly adequate. (It may be remarked that in the period 1730–50 which has figured so largely in these discussions there were also bad seasons. 1736[5] is reported on by Baker in exactly the same terms as many of the years in the early seventies, and the disaster of 1739–40 is too well known to require comment here—in its consequences on mortality, economic activity, and foreign trade this was far worse than the difficulties of the sixties and seventies.)

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[1] For this topic, see E. L. Jones, *Seasons and Prices* (1964).

[2] Despite Dr. Jones's work, based on T. H. Baker, *A Record of Seasons and Prices*, there is still a good deal of scope for comparative work, on the lines done by M. Leroy Ladurie in France. See also C. E. Brooks, 'The Climate of the First Half of the Eighteenth Century', *Q. Journ. of the Roy. Metereolog. Soc.*, 56 (1930), pp. 389–402, and J. Glasspoole, ' Two Centuries of Rain', *The Metereol. Magazine*, vol. 63, 1928. See also Deane, *First Ind. Rev.*, p. 228.

[3] Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 141. In general, bad weather is much better documented than good seasons.

[4] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 103, and the series by Combrune, *op. cit.*

[5] Jones, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

As regards productivity, it cannot seriously be argued that the rate of improvement of agricultural organization and technique was slower after 1750 than before. Whether one goes by the period of activity of the pioneers (only Tull and Townsend function before 1750), by the enclosure movement,[1] which only reached its first peak in the years 1764–77, or by the direct evidence of sales from the great estates and the movement of produce by canal, it is clear that the period under discussion witnessed the beginning of the agricultural revolution which laid the foundations for the industrial one. This is as we would expect: for it is precisely the rising prices which provide the incentive, the visible growth of the market. Low prices and abundant harvests, before 1750, could not move the landlords, even with good corn bounties, in the same way as the later period when good harvests were no longer a disaster, because they clearly mean larger quantities sold at prices which were an improvement on the 1730s, and when the growth of the urban market was there for all to see.[2] (It must be remembered that before 1760 very few people thought that the population was growing at all; there were no canals, and the rate of growth even of the London market was not visible to the naked eye.)[3]

After 1750 the London market became increasingly important and, in fact, distorted the national price structure completely.[4] Hence it is not surprising that different authors vary in their assessment of the state of the market. A comparison of the Windsor and Birmingham series in Table 3 shows a wider range of oscillations in the provincial market, far from water transport, until the canal connexion was made. Hence food prices must always be scrutinized in their context before conclusions are drawn, either for the consumer or the producer.

The fact that these relatively low prices and steady supplies constituted a powerful stimulus to demand did not escape contemporaries and, indeed, entered into the accounts of the classical and neo-classical economists.[1] Malthus himself in one of the characteristic passages where he reflects upon the fact that his theoretical relationships between population and subsistence cannot be tested in prudent England, attributes the rise in the standard of living of his compatriots to low food prices.[2] Although the reference there is to the period 1720–50, it must be noted that he merely points to the fact that during those years the labouring people acquired their new tastes, and the text implies that these remained until the end of the century. Only after 1790[3] is the erosion of the customary levels through price rises such that population increases at a faster rate, prudence having been diminished. The same sequence underlies the views of Alfred Marshall,[4] basing himself partly on the evidence of Eden.[5] But nowhere is there better evidence for the firm establishment of the new customary standards than in the Poor Law administration at the time of Speenhamland, when few quarrelled with the view that wheaten bread was the Englishman's birthright and that his income must be adjusted to safeguard his supplies. Had there really been a price rise of a serious kind before the wars, this standard, established for a generation and a half, would have been abandoned again.[6] In itself, of course, the survival of the wheat standard at least in the south is not evidence that there was also purchasing power for other commodities: but what we are here stressing is that Smith, Malthus, Eden, and the Poor Law authorities saw good food as the prerogative even of the lowest income groups for whom we would not claim that they were purchasers of industrial commodities on a significant scale. It is merely implicit in any more or less continuous income function that if the poorest had this, the next layers had more.[7]

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[1] Chambers and Mingay, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

[2] Cf. G. E. Mingay, *English Landed Society in the Eighteenth Century* (1963), ch. VIII.

[3] The Yield Ratios collected by Prof. B. H. Slicher van Bath (*A.A.G. Bijdragen*, X (1963), pp. 53 ff.), especially when compared with other series, give some fascinating but unfortunately fragmentary clues to productivity. Much remains to be done in this respect. The English series are thinnest just when we would find them most interesting, since they effectively begin only with the statistically-minded Arthur Young.

[4] Cf. F. A. Wendeborn, *A View of England towards the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (1791), I, p. 268: many things were cheaper in London than in their county of origin.

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[1] See Adam Smith, as quoted in Hartwell, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

[2] T. R. Malthus, *Principles of Political Economy* (1836), pp. 228–9.

[3] Malthus, *Essay on Population* (Everyman ed., 1914), II, p. 139.

[4] Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (8th ed., 1930), p. 189.

[5] Eden, *State of the Poor*, I, pp. 560–4.

[6] The foreigners always marvelled why it was that the English dog would not eat offal like his European counterparts. In the last analysis there are deeper sociological, rather than economic, explanations of why the British were able to insist on a superior diet. The connexion between political and social structure and its effect on the economy is only just beginning to be traced. Cf. Peter Laslett, *The World We have Lost* (1966), pp. 107 ff. 'Did the Peasants really Starve?' See also Deane, *First Ind. Rev.*, p. 10.

[7] But Eden did not think wheat was necessary. This would be true even where the bottom strata did not have wheat. Professor G. P. Jones has pointed out to me that at Swarthmoor Hall they also ate oaten bread. Eden continually stresses

10 The Test of 1770–80

The significant test for the validity of the thesis put forward here must come from an examination of conditions during the decade 1770–80. This, on the basis of any foreign trade or shipping figures, comes out as a bad time for British exports. This slump is largely, but not wholly, attributable to the interruption of trade with the North American (Continental) colonies, which was worth £1.5 m. less in 1776–80 than it had been ten years earlier. Other trade increased in part, or declined, largely owing to repercussions from the American war ('triangular' trade routes suffered, but Canada profited).

Recovery did not begin until 1782. In terms of growth rates the seventies must have been disastrous for the export-orientated industries, whatever they were. Volumes, where we know them, declined even faster than values, since prices were also falling.[1] Now, if it had really been true that the price rises due to the inadequacies of agricultural supplies to the domestic market had any serious repercussions for the consumer, then the total value of production should have fallen at least during those ten years, investment should have lagged, and cries of distress should have been heard. But imports did not decline to anything like the same extent (except for colonial goods, many of them for re-export to America, which naturally slumped). In the case of textile raw materials, there is an almost continuous rise of imports in the 1770's (hemp, silk, cotton, wool).[2] London used record quantities of sea

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the regional differences (*ibid.*, I, 496–501 and elsewhere), but one should read into them no more than is warranted, i.e. that to the upper classes and most southerners (like Samuel Johnson) to eat anything except wheat was inferior, and that whoever ate barley, oats or rye must be poor. The corollary is, especially for Eden of Co. Durham, that the poor should help themselves by not asking for wheat. It was not, after all, as if the principles of Speenhamland were known only in the southern counties: only that the catastrophe of the wartime prices was less noticeable in the more adaptable northern areas.

[1] There were a few exceptions. Cf. Schumpeter, *op. cit.*, Table VIII, p. 24.

[2] The 1777 level of raw wool imports was a record until 1785. When linen exports were at their lowest level for thirty years (from England, in 1781), Scottish linen stamped for sale rose to above 15 million yards for the first time (Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, pp. 200–1). In 1775 the lowest amount of silk manufactures was exported since 1745, and the largest amount of raw silk ever was imported the following year. Cotton re-exports existed, but were negligible.

coal.[1] Sales of copper ore in Cornwall and Devon[2] reached record levels in the mid-1770s—a particularly important commodity in judging the level of activity in the new Midlands industries.

For many other domestic consumption figures, the same general picture emerges. Beer consumption,[3] if we can judge by the quantity of strong beer charged with duty, went up in total and probably remained level *per capita*: malt remained steady, but hops increased considerably.[4] Spirit gallonage went up by over 10 per cent, though, of course, it did not reach pre-1750 levels.[5] Candles, paper, starch, and soap—all these common consumer goods which come to our knowledge through the duties paid on them climb steadily, in total and *per capita*, throughout the 1770s. Lastly, the acceleration on the rate of applications for patents is noticeable in the 1770s.

In industrial history this decade is also pre-eminent for the rate of foundation of new enterprises. It was a period of great activity at Coalbrookdale,[6] culminating in the building of the Iron Bridge which epitomizes innovation, willingness to invest, and the response to an active inland market. The Grand Trunk Canal was built. In 1771 Arkwright settled at Cromford, and by 1779 his mills there had reached the state that made them an object of pilgrimage. In fact, the great majority of his factories in all parts of the Midlands and the North-West originated in this period. The first Watt steam engines were erected in Cornwall at the end of the decade when the local mine-owners were unable to fulfil demands for copper ore from existing levels. All these selections are to some extent arbitrary, but they serve to reinforce the general point.

If export industries had produced 'leading sector' effects before 1770, industrialization should have been slowed down. Instead of this there was visible acceleration just when, according to Professor John's thesis, the home market should have become much more difficult through rising prices and faster population growth. Since the evidence for reduced exports in the period 1770–9 is incontrovertible, and since production and innovation also flourished, we may take this as additional proof of our main thesis, that the purchasing power of broad sections of the home market was still increasing at a beneficial rate.

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[1] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 157.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 251.

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 247–251. The whole of the brewing statistics are best explained in P. Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England* (Cambridge, 1959), esp. Tables 36 and 41. Beer was definitely getting stronger, hence the malt/hop discrepancy. This in itself should be a sign of affluence!

[5] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, pp. 255–6.

[6] A. Raistrick, *Dynasty of Ironfounders* (1953), pp. 91 ff., for a good picture of the period.

11 The Rate of Population Growth

We have been at pains to stress the rising or at least stable purchasing power of the home market in the period 1750–80. The question naturally arises: what was the rate of population growth, and the distribution of the increase, that permitted this state of affairs? And why did the 'Malthusian' effects not make themselves felt at this time? In other words, why did England not produce a Malthus twenty years earlier?

The short theoretical answer is that population growth at this time was 'right'—neither so small as to cause shortages of labour, or of demand for goods and services, nor so large as to reduce real wages, create labour surpluses and destroy the basis of demand. Such an answer is not incompatible with the existence of pockets of excessive or insufficent growth, with distress in some areas and great prosperity in others. Without the benefit of the results of recalculations of British population figures in the eighteenth century now being undertaken, we may base ourselves on the tables published by Deane, Cole and Mitchell as affording at any rate a consistent outline. The Cambridge calculations,[1] based essentially still on Rickman but corrected in the light of later work such as Brownlee's, give a rate of natural increase of only about one per thousand for the period 1701–50. This is, in fact, composed of a number of short-term rates: growth early in the century, stagnation or even recession 1720–30, and then accelerated growth to 1750. For the period 1750–80 with which we are here concerned the growth rate is given as 6.8 per thousand, which is very similar to that which obtained since 1730. Only after 1780 do growth rates rise to above 1 per cent to a maximum of over 1½ per cent in the early nineteenth century.

Mr. Colin Clark[2] has furnished us with an excellent model of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century population growth based on an observed rate of natural increase just quoted, and consistent with such vital rates as we do possess. He has based himself (see Table 4) on

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[1] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

[2] *Population Growth and Land use,* London 1967, p. 56.

Table 4. Demographic Model of Eighteenth-Century Population Growth (after Colin Clark)

Age group	Female survivors of 1,000 total births based on Swedish mortality of		Expected[b] percentage married	Marital[c] age-specific fertility	Age-specific fertility all women[d]	Offspring at survival rates of	
	1757–63[a]	1816–40	not widowed			1757–63	1816–40
15–19	1,448	1,731	2	.43	.01	14	17
20–24	1,391	1,683	30	.43	.13	181	219
25–29	1,338	1,627	60	.41	.25	334	406
30–34	1,247	1,558	70	.37	.26	324	405
35–39	1,202	1,487	75	.30	.22	265	327
40–44	1,130	1,400	70	.15	.10	113	140
45–49	1,049	1,308	65	.02	.01	10	13
Total fertility					4.90		
Gross reproduction rate					2.38		
Net reproduction rate						1.241	1.527
Average rate of population growth % per year						0.7	1.4

[a] Only general survival rate given: ratios of female to general rate assumed the same as in 1816–40.

[b] Based on 1851 data for England and Wales, but raised slightly because of nineteenth-century rates of male emigration having probably been higher than eighteenth century.

[c] Henry's general estimate for eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe (15–19 added).

[d] Product of two previous columns.

the Swedish life tables of the two periods in order to give some precision to his calculations, but certainly his assumptions fit the British pattern. It will be seen that he assumes only a third of the women marrying before the age of 25, total marital fertility of just under five children per married woman, and a rate of infant and child mortality reducing a gross reproduction rate of 2.38 to a net 1.241 in the middle of the eighteenth century and 1.527 early in the nineteenth. Whilst we would not assert at this stage that these rates are correct in detail, it is useful to adduce them to show that there is a satisfactory growth model which fits in with the sort of hypotheses here advanced.

These figures are significant. The 1750–80 rate is the nearest of all those given to that obtaining in many west European countries today. It is well below current Dutch or North American rates, which approximate more to those ruling in England round 1800. But the significant feature is that a growth rate of under 1 per cent, slowly increasing, is much more favourable to economic growth than that of the euphemistically-termed developing nations of Asia and Latin America, where 2, 3, and even 4 per cent per annum is still common. A rate of 0.7 per cent is manageable in an economy where capital resources are not yet easily mobilized, communications still in need of much improvement, and agricultural output not yet rising at the sort of speed which mechanization made possible much later. On the other hand, the total increase of one and a half million people between 1750 and 1780 was probably as high as that observed in any previous period of a hundred years, and it provided a useful labour force where it was needed. If the whole country increased by under 25 per cent in thirty years, Lancashire increased by a third, the West Riding by half, Warwickshire by just under 40 per cent.[1] But Devonshire stagnated. There is no question that the increase was absorbed: according to Miss Deane's calculations, the industrial counties gained more people by migration than by natural increase. Poverty may have been a problem, unemployment as such was unknown.

Given the differential in agricultural and industrial wages previously mentioned, which in the case of Lancashire and Warwickshire certainly meant an increase in real wages, we can say that the shift of population into the industrializing and urban counties meant an increase in consumption per head. In any case, it must be stressed again, all migration from country to town means a stimulus to industrial production, for however much the old self-sufficient community may have changed even before 1750 to a system of craft specialization, it was only with the concentration in towns that the possibility of mass production and distribution became feasible, and only with canals that prices of supplies to distant markets bore some relation to the cost of production.[1]

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[1] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

What, then, were the factors which kept population growth to such a convenient level? There are basically two types of causes involved in every such growth rate: involuntary and voluntary. The involuntary factor in the holding down of the population increase is mainly the failure of mortality to fall any further. As we now know, the main reasons for such reduction of mortality as was experienced in the eighteenth century was not the increase in medical or surgical skill, but the non-recurrence of periodic epidemics on the scale known before 1740, which sometimes wiped out the gains of a previous generation. This has been explained in detail elsewhere,[2] and we do not here enter into discussions of the relative merits of smallpox inoculation and environmental factors. Infant mortality, in particular, was probably not reduced at all, or by only very little. Adult mortality from the common endemic diseases remained at a high level, and did not improve until the nineteenth century.[3] But because after 1740 there were no great crises of mortality (defined as periods when deaths exceeded births over any considerable area, i.e. excluding London or Liverpool, where this may have happened at intervals until much later), marital unions had a better chance of continuing unbroken. This in turn had an effect on fertility. We do not yet know whether there was also an increase in age-specific fertility (i.e. the number of children born per thousand women of any given age group), but it is likely that there was, because the proportion of first marriages to all marriages increased in a period of smaller mortality in the middle age groups. This would be so even if there were no reduction in still births, or in the premature involuntary ending of pregnancies through infection and accident. We can only note at this stage that mortality declined, but not as fast as it did later and that therefore the rate of increase in population growth is kept down on this account alone.

Secondly, there are the voluntary causes. What Malthus and others tried to convey in the passages previously mentioned was that prudence was being exercised in England precisely on account of the standard of living already attained. Malthus meant by this late marriage, and certainly there is no sign (contrary to previous assumptions) that there was a fall in the age at marriage in the eighteenth century. When the Registrar-General first reported, the age at first marriage was where it was everywhere in the 'western' system.[1] Malthus only told us what happened in the most improvident strata of society, and systematized his fears about the future, no doubt influenced by the effects of wartime rises and the spread of the Speenhamland system. His picture is not to be taken as representative of England in the second half of the eighteenth century.

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[1] See above p. 217.

[2] Cf. Eversley, 'Population, Economy and Society', in Glass and Eversley, *op. cit.*, pp. 53 ff., and P. E. Razzell, 'Population Change in Eighteenth Century England. A Re-Interpretation', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVIII (1965), pp. 312 ff.

[3] T. McKeown and R. G. Record, 'Reasons for the Decline of Mortality in England and Wales during the Nineteenth Century', *Population Studies*, XVI (1962), p. 94.

Late marriage has important economic connotations quite apart from its effect on the rate of population growth. Firstly, it helps to raise savings, especially where the middle classes are concerned. Provided they are not hoarded, savings do not undermine the market, but divert expenditure to capital goods and thus help to stimulate some types of industry (e.g. shipbuilding) as well as laying the foundations for future mass production. Secondly, late marriage was designed to, and probably did, ensure a standard of living far above the breadline: in other words, households thus founded were more likely to be significant consumers than those begun too early. Whilst there is no doubt about the limitation of fertility by late marriage, we have no evidence as to whether there was widespread avoidance of marriage. By the time there are accurate data on the number of persons dying unmarried, it certainly does not look as if celibacy was an important factor. The possibility cannot be ruled out in some areas, especially those from which there was sex-biased migration.

We are on still more difficult ground when it comes to the voluntary limitation of births within marriage. We can no longer doubt that there was a possibility of this, after Dr. Wrigley's demonstration of the course of fertility at Colyton.[2] We already know that the French began to restrict births even before the Revolution. There is increasingly important material relating to abortions and the use of prolonged lactation to avoid conception. Such data as we possess up till now certainly does not suggest that birth intervals between live births much in excess of

[1] J. Hajnal, 'European Marriage Patterns in Perspective', in Glass and Eversley, *op. cit.*, pp. 101 ff.

[2] E. A. Wrigley, 'Family Limitation in Pre-Industrial England', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XIX (1966), pp. 82 ff.

twenty-seven months were normal, especially where the mother was under 30 years of age, but they do occur, and whilst many of these cases no doubt result from spontaneous abortion or simple failure to conceive, it is possible that they indicate deliberate limitation—whether by abstention, *coitus interruptus*, the use of simple appliances, or deliberate abortion.

At any rate, the crude birth rates which have been collected in English case studies so far[1] are nowhere near those which would have ruled if all marriages which were contracted had lasted for an average of fifteen years (which on present mortality evidence they should have done) and had produced the biological maximum compatible with a year's breast feeding, i.e. a child roughly every two years, or seven per marriage. The highest marital fertility rates we have encountered for this period are only just on five children per marriage (there were few sterile couples). More significantly, many calculations have produced averages of only just over three children per marriage.

Therefore it cannot be ruled out that there was some limitation. Now, it will be recalled that we are dealing in this essay with only one section of the total population: the artisans, the tradesmen, the more substantial farmers, the engineers and clerks. They are the new middle-income group, they are also the rising part of the population. They are precisely those of whom nineteenth-century writers claimed that they were most prone to marry late and carefully and later to limit their families.[2] They were the nascent *bourgeoisie*. We therefore do not have to postulate that either the common labourers or the wealthy sections limited their families in one way or another. If we assume, as we do here, that between 20 and 30 per cent of the population were affected by the new movements, and if that section limited its families to the extent of one child less than the unrestricted average would have been, this would alone account for a 5 per cent reduction of total fertility, or a birth rate about two per thousand less than it might have been. This is highly probable and consistent with all the facts we have observed.

To sum up this part of our argument. We have said that population grew at a natural rate of seven per thousand. Death rates were down on previous totals to the extent that epidemics failed to occur, but still remained well above the level of the early nineteenth century. The birth rate fell in later years, as population grew, but fertility had not yet reached its maximum by any means. Statistically, it seems probable that the difference between the natural increase rate of 1750–80 and that prevailing two generations later is accounted for in equal measure by the falls in mortality and the rise in fertility still to come.[1]

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[1] For a bibliography of such studies, cf. Lynda Ovenall in ed. Wrigley, *An Introduction to English Historical Demography* (1966), pp. 249 ff., e.g. Chambers for Nottingham, Sogner for Shropshire, Eversley for Worcestershire. There are others in preparation showing the same pattern (Martin for Warwickshire in his Ph.D. thesis, *op. cit.*).

[2] Eversley, *Social Theories of Fertility*, ch. IV, sections 2 and 3.

If growth rates had been twice as high as they were (i.e. had the population grown by 3 m. instead of 1½ m.), and especially if that additional growth had been due to higher fertility and lower infant mortality, it is highly likely that the standard of living of the population would have fallen. More young children mean higher dependency ratios, to use a term of modern growth analysis: more mouths to feed and fewer hands to feed them, to use Malthusian language. Larger families are, even today, poor consumers except for basic necessities. The small family (especially if the mother works) buys more luxuries, remains in better health, saves more. There can be little doubt that the equilibrium of economic growth in this period is connected with a highly convenient population growth rate. Could there have been a causal connexion? The answer is probably positive. After 1740, for the first time, more people live in a non-catastrophic world. Food, shelter, and clothing became a certain expectation. Calamitous deaths become rarer. Opportunities for upward movement become more frequent. Under these circumstances, prudence about marriage, and restriction of families, go with saving, geographical and social mobility, and reduced mortality. Reduced mortality results from better environmental conditions, the more regular supplies of necessities, and the incipient improvements in drainage, water supplies, and the rest of the familiar though overstressed catalogue of wonders of the Industrial Revolution.[2]

12 The General Model and Conclusions

We have now set out at length the elements in the socio-economic situation which lead, in our view, to the conclusion that the years from 1750–1780 form an essential part of the preparation for full-scale industrialization. Without doubting the significance of the earlier period, we have tried to show that the impetus of these thirty years was even more important because it consolidated the advance gained, perpetuated the new structure of the home market and encouraged the entrepreneurs of the time to take up innovations and to invest vastly larger sums of capital.

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[1] This cannot be wholly gauged by looking at the crude (i.e. non-specific) birth- and death-rates, which depend too much on rapidly changing age and sex structures.

[2] This is not meant to imply any disrespect to Ashton's views in *The Industrial Revolution*—these things have some validity, though not, in the light of most recent work, as much as we all once believed.

In this situation the family, the unit of consumers and producers, plays a basic role. The backbone of the industrial State is that part of the labour force which in our diagram of increasing real incomes is contained in the central growing bulge. Let us classify the conditions for its survival.

(1) It must have an assured income above the subsistence level.

(2) It must be mobile to be available wherever skilled labour and management are required.

(3) It must be allowed to keep its rising real wages, which must not be eroded by its own actions (e.g. too many children), the State (taxation), or their employers (by adjusting wages to living costs when prices fall), or by other parts of the population (by the arrival of a surplus of labour through natural increase or immigration).

On the other hand, the following need *not* apply:

(1) There is no need for the disappearance of a proletariat, or the cessation of its growth. In fact, as cheap labour it performs regrettable useful functions so long as the proportion of have-nots and buy-nots does not increase too fast.

(2) There is no need for this class of consumer/producers to exist everywhere. Within a regional economy, it is enough that there should be growing pockets of such people.

(3) They need not always be consumers: the system will tolerate years of stringency due to higher food prices, temporary closure of some markets, or redundancy for some skills.

(4) Rising real wages are not incompatible with rising money wages, nor high money wages with cheap products.

On balance, of course, the number and proportion of active consumers must grow continually, especially so as to provide a good market for consumer durables and the construction industries. Guessing from the statistics already quoted, it would not be impossible to postulate that in 1750 something like 15 per cent of the population had family incomes in the range between £50 and £400 p.a., and that by 1780 the proportion had risen to 20 per cent or even 25 per cent, and in absolute numbers this would mean an extra 150,000 households which functioned as consumers for the range of goods we have described. On the totals available from industry and commerce for the home market (see Table 2), this would mean that each of these households (over 300,000 of them) might be able to spend £30 per annum on industrial output and commercial services. This would account for £10 m. of the total (which, as we saw, might be computed at £30 m. in 1770). This would leave £10 m. for the much smaller number of really large incomes (30,000 households at £300 each) and another £10 m. to be shared by the residual 1,200,000 poorer households, at £8 each, or 3*s.* per week. In case this seems high, this would comprise not only consumer durables and bricks, glass, nails, etc., for housing, but also candles, all clothes, tools, and so on. In each case, obviously, there is to be included the proportion attributable to each notional household of public expenditure (Poor Law, street commissioners, defence) and private investment (agricultural implements, machines, means of transport). There is no implication that the 3*s.* would have to be found in cash, though there is no reason why this would not have been possible as an average.

Clearly this model of the national income structure (see diagram III) is purely hypothetical. It is presented here merely to show a *feasible* basis for the kind of economic growth we observe. It has been arrived at, in many ways, as a residual, by the rejection of the alternative hypotheses which were, basically, either that exports were responsible for the major part of the increased total demand, or that it came only from the wealthy households and their immediate retainers and suppliers. It would have been absurd to attempt to distribute the whole of the extra purchasing power equally through the whole population.

Lastly, since we have postulated that the whole structure varied from region to region, we must allow for the group in question to have been either much larger or much richer in some areas, and smaller or poorer in others. And since we have said that the sums involved are long-term averages, it will follow that at times locally or nationally both the group and its income were smaller and at others larger. Therefore we must not, as the Hammonds once did and as their successors do to this day, take the lamentations of pamphleteers like David Davies, or even

Sir F. M. Eden[1] at times, at their face value, but allow that what they said was true of its time and its place, and the people of whom they wrote.

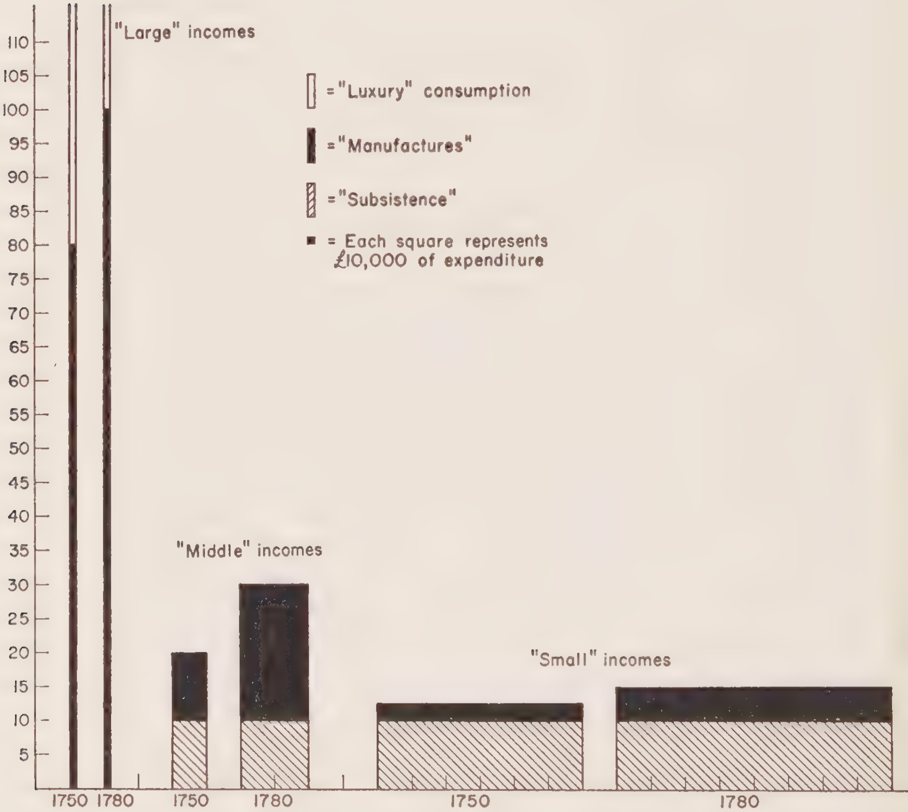

Diagram III. Household Income and Expenditure, 1750 and 1780

For it is our final conclusion that if the condition of the worst-afflicted section of our industrial and agricultural proletariat in the early nineteenth century, especially in the northern cities and some of the backward rural counties, had been the common fate of all the country's working population, industrialization could not have taken place. The incentive to investment and the increase in the scale of operations must have come from an increasingly broadly based and in the long run continuous and expanding home market. The foundation of the industrial revolution, in this model, is laid by the home sales of articles of everyday life to a section of the labour force which was neither very poor nor very rich, but wielded effective purchasing power in the face of many difficulties. Had food shortages, labour displacement by mechanization, or the subsistence theory of wages won the day, there would have been no industry. The remarkable (and probably unique) feature of the British industrial and commercial scene was the existence of this free, mobile, prudent section of the population which was able to assert some choice in the pattern of its expenditures sufficiently often to provide the stimulus which at least in our period neither foreign markets nor luxury consumers could have given. With some variations therefore, we conclude that the causes operative in the period 1730–50 continued to exercise much influence for the next thirty years, and that it is during this period that the most important foundations of the industrial State were laid.[1]

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[1] David Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry Stated and Considered* (1795) is a case of special pleading; Eden is not, except that anyone writing at the time is bound to overstate the dismal aspect of the changes of the last years of the century which many considered to be a long-term trend.

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[1] This does not exhaust the catalogue of possible analyses. A paper of mine published in 1960, 'Population and Economic Growth in England before the Take-off' (First International Conference of Economic History, Stockholm, 1960, *Contributions and Communications*, The Hague, 1960, pp. 457 ff.), contained something of a shopping list of economic and demographic phenomena which awaited further investigation, having been mentioned in passing in the literature. Most of them still lack a researcher. Finally, the whole of the approach of this paper has been deliberately kept to the field of agrarian and industrial economics and demography, under the strong influence of the man to whom this volume is dedicated. One cannot rule out the possibility, however, that a more strongly sociological approach may also prove fruitful.

P. E. Razzell

10 Population Growth and Economic Change in Eighteenth- and Early Nineteenth-Century England and Ireland

In recent papers on this important and controversial subject Professor Chambers has eloquently argued that although population growth and economic change were linked in eighteenth-century England the increase in population cannot be explained directly in economic terms.[1] This is a view no longer fashionable. As is well known, the traditional 'medical' explanations of a fall in the death rate have been discredited by medical historians, a conclusion that has led them to an assumption that economic growth must have preceded and 'caused' population expansion. In this essay I try to deal with some of the important problems raised by Professor Chambers, and attempt to demonstrate that the large increase in population during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries was in no way due to economic factors, but on the contrary was a major cause of economic change, which in England culminated in those changes known as the Industrial Revolution.

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[1] See particularly J. D. Chambers, 'The Vale of Trent 1670–1800', *Econ. Hist. Rev*. Supp. 3. He concluded from this study that population 'was vulnerable to disease, but not as a result of famine. Epidemics could do their own work without its aid, nor it would seem, did they require the assistance of gin. . . For reasons which are far from clear, its [disease's] severity was mitigated from the middle of the [eighteenth] century in this region, especially in regard to the lower age groups. . . .'

I

The first point to be considered is whether the increase in population was due to a fall in the death rate or a rise in the birth rate. One of the most popular interpretations of the growth of population is the neo-Malthusian view that there was an increase in the birth rate due to expanding employment opportunities and a rise in the general standard of living, associated with the economic advances, encouraging earlier marriage and a higher marriage rate. However, there is evidence to suggest that both the age at marriage and the marriage rate were roughly constant throughout the eighteenth century.[1] Professor Chambers himself has published statistics for agricultural villages which suggest that both the birth and marriage rates may have declined between 1743 and 1801 in the Vale of Trent region.[2] In 1751 Thomas Short published statistics of population, baptisms, marriages, and burials during 1724–36 for seven market towns and fifty-four rural parishes.[3] According to his figures, the baptism rate was 33.8 per 1,000 and the burial rate 29.4 per 1,000; undoubtedly some births and deaths were not registered owing to the presence of Dissenters, particularly in the market towns. This, of course, would raise both the 'true' birth and death rates. If we compare these rates with those computed from civil registration returns in the 1840s, it is quite clear that the long-term birth rate was more or less constant, while there was a sharp fall in the death rate. The latter is also confirmed by the figures for agricultural villages published by Chambers.[4] One of the weakest points in the neo-Malthusian argument is that the fairly reliable figures of the 1840s indicate no particular association between the distribution of industry and high fertility rates. The counties with the highest age-specific birth and marriage rates and the lowest age at marriage during the early 1840s were Cambridge, Bedford, Huntingdon, and Northamptonshire, all largely agricultural counties; although Lancashire had a high crude birth rate, its age specific birth rate and age at marriage appear to have been about average.[1] Furthermore, the age at marriage of spinsters appears to have varied little between different social strata during the eighteenth century, suggesting that economic considerations were not paramount in determining the age at marriage for women at least.[2]

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[1] The figures for the age at marriage are derived from marriage licences which are not entirely satisfactory. However, figures from parish registers suggest a similar conclusion. See C. C. Morell, 'Tudor Marriages and Infantile Mortality', *Journal of State Medicine*, XLIII (1935), p. 179.

[2] Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 55. We do not have to take these figures too literally to conclude that the birth- and marriage-rates did not rise.

[3] T. Short, *New Observations on Bills of Mortality* (1751), p. 133.

[4] Chambers, *op. cit.*, p. 55. The reverse of these trends applied, however, in the town of Nottingham.

It is difficult to draw any reliable conclusions from the statistics derived from the Anglican parish registers. The figures for burials are much more reliable than those for baptisms; this is because so few Nonconformists were buried outside the Anglican Church,[3] and the main reason for the under-registration of deaths was the existence of private burial grounds in the large cities.[4] If we exclude urban industrial counties from the analysis, it is clear that there was a substantial fall in the death rate during the eighteenth century,[5] not unlike that estimated by Talbot Griffiths.

In addition to this evidence, several recent studies of the aristocracy and gentry indicate that there was a sharp drop in mortality during the middle of the eighteenth century.[6] Hollingsworth's study of the aristocracy yielded the following increase of expectation of life at birth for females during the eighteenth century:

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[1] The age at marriage in Lancashire was about the same as for the country as a whole. The ranking of age-specific birth-rates varies considerably according to which age group of women is considered; if the age group 20–30 is taken the age-specific birth-rate is below average, for the age group 15–45 it is above average. See *4th R. G. Report 1842*, p. 9; *8th R. G. Report 1847*, pp. 5, 37, 187, 191.

[2] The mean ages at marriage of spinsters calculated from the Nottinghamshire marriage bonds and allegations for the period 1701–70 were as follows (number in sample is given in brackets): Farmers and yeomen: 24 (285); Husbandmen: 24½ (235); Labourers and servants: 25 (390); Artisans and tradesmen: 23½ (290); 'Gentlemen': 24 (210).

[3] There were four baptism birth registers to one burial register kept by religious nonconformists before 1810. Few Methodists buried outside of the Anglican Church before 1810. See 'Report on Non-Parochial Registers', *Parl. Pap. 1837–38/28.*

[4] This was reflected in the death/burial ratios for different counties, e.g. the 1839–40 ratio for Lancashire was 1.61, as against the national average of 1.18. P. Deane and W. Cole, *British Economic Growth 1688–1959* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 108, 109.

[5] According to the Deane and Cole figures, the death-rate in eighteen southern counties fell from 30.6/1,000 in 1701–50 to 20.6/1,000 in 1801–30. *Ibid.*, p. 127. Although these figures must not be taken too literally, the long-run trend is probably fairly accurately described by them.

[6] See my 'Population Change in Eighteenth-Century England. A Reinterpretation', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVIII (1965); T. H. Hollingsworth, 'A Demographic Study of the British Ducal Families', *Population Studies*, XI (1957); T. H. Hollingsworth 'The Demography Of The British Peerage', Supp., *Population Studies*, XVIII, No. 2 (1964).

Table 1. Expectation of life at birth for aristocratic women.

1700–24	1723–49	1750–74	1775–99	1800–24
36.3	36.7	45.7	49.0	51.7[1]

Most of the increase in life-expectancy was due to the saving of life amongst younger age groups. These statistics are derived from sources sufficiently reliable for us to be sure that they describe a genuine sharp decline in mortality. Although it is not justifiable to generalize about the total population from such a finding, we must attempt to explain it in terms which might be relevant for the whole population. Obviously an explanation in terms of the quantity of food supply is irrelevant to groups such as the gentry and aristocracy. Mortality diminished so rapidly during 1750–74 that one must seek an explanation more radical than those usually given. It is my view that such an explanation is the effective introduction of inoculation against smallpox from about 1740 onwards.

The elimination of smallpox amongst the aristocracy could explain the whole of the rise in the expectation of life for that group,[2] and indeed for the whole of the increase in population during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. For the population as a whole inoculation only became popular after about 1765, when the Suttons perfected their much safer technique. Jenner himself recognized this, for he wrote 'that the common people were rarely inoculated for the smallpox, till that practice was rendered general by the improved method of the Suttons. . . .'[3] Howlett in 1782 collected statistics from 225 parishes for the two approximate periods 1734–53 and 1754–73; the balance of baptisms over burials in the first period was negligible,

[1] Hollingsworth, *op. cit.* (1964), p. 57.

[2] That inoculation was responsible for the elimination of smallpox, rather than vaccination, is supported by the negligible rise in life-expectancy for the aristocracy between 1800 and 1824.

[3] *The Medical Repository* (New York, 1803), V, 239. Chambers draws attention to payment by a Nottinghamshire parish to one of the Suttons for inoculating some poor children in 1767, *op. cit.*, p. 32 n. 4. He also notes a relatively slight smallpox epidemic occurring in Nottingham in 1801, which is not incompatible with the slow spread of inoculation in towns outlined in earlier papers. The same is to some extent true of Boston, Lincs. (mentioned by Chambers), where the decline of registered smallpox deaths was from 14.1 smallpox burials per 100 baptisms during 1749–75 to 5.25 per 100 during 1776–1802.

and was only slightly greater in the second, suggesting that the great increase in population occurred after 1770,[1] which fits in very well with the chronology of the spread of inoculation. Other medical and environmental 'improvements' were associated with the large towns, yet in 1801 only about a fifth of the total population lived in towns with a population greater than 10,000.[2] Even as late as the 1840s mortality in the large towns was very high: for example, about $48\frac{1}{2}$ per cent of all males born in the Liverpool district died before the age of 5 during 1838–44[3] Any improvements in the large towns would have been more than outweighted by the consequence of a smaller proportion of the total population now living in the relatively healthy rural areas. Furthermore, the medical historians T. McKeown and R. G. Brown have pointed out that most of the medical 'improvements' during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, e.g. fever hospitals and midwifery services, were probably ineffective.[4] Even if they were effective it is doubtful whether they affected more than a very small minority of the total population.[5]

In the country as a whole smallpox was the only significant epidemic disease so far as mortality was concerned. For example, Charles Deering, the historian of Nottingham, wrote in 1751 that 'there mostly happens once in five Years some Distemperature in the Air, which either brings along with it some Epidemical Fever, (tho' seldom very Mortal) or renders the Small-Pox more dangerous than at other Times; of this last, the Year 1736, was a fatal Instance . . . the Burials exceeded that Year the Births by above 380. . . .'[6] Deering implied that smallpox occurred

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[1] The exact figures are:

	Baptisms	Burials	Marriages
1734–53	109,478	104,750	34,110
1754–73	123,715	109,758	40,285

See J. Howlett, *Observations on The Increased Population, Healthiness . . . of Maidstone* (Maidstone, 1782), p. 14. This pamphlet was published anonymously and a copy of it is to be found in Maidstone Museum.

[2] See B. R. Mitchell and P. Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge, 1962), pp. 8, 24–27.

[3] *8th R.G. Report, 1846*, p. 206.

[4] T. McKeown and R. G. Brown, 'Medical Evidence Related to English Population Changes in the 18th Century', *Population Studies*, IX (1955–6).

[5] With reference to improvements in midwifery, the figures produced by Dr. Eversley for the Worcestershire area do not suggest any significant fall in infant mortality during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; this finding is compatible with the high infant mortality rate (about 15 per cent) for England and Wales at the beginning of civil registration. See D. E. C. Eversley, 'A Survey of Population in an Area of Worcestershire from 1660–1850 on the Basis of Parish Records', *Population Studies*, X (1956–7), pp. 269–71.

[6] C. Deering, *Nottinghamshire Vetus Et Nova* (Nottingham, 1751), p. 82.

in Nottingham every five years or so, a cycle of epidemics that we know from bills of mortality and parish registers to be very similar to those in other towns like Northampton and Maidstone. He also pointed out that the 1736 epidemic was the most severe since the Plague. Smallpox was increasing in virulence throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, an increase which was particularly marked during the 1720s and afterwards. For example, the total number of smallpox deaths in Godalming, Surrey, was as follows: 1686, 50; 1701, 24; 1710–11, 39; 1722–3, 94.[1] This is the probable explanation for the check to population increase which occurred in the 1720s; although Creighton, the medical historian, mentions influenza as an important disease during this period, it never appears in bills of mortality and parish registers (under the label of fever) as accounting for large numbers of deaths during an epidemic, as does smallpox. An example of how misleading Creighton was on this question is to be found at Exeter in 1729. Creighton reported a rumour that the high mortality during that year was due to influenza, yet a local diarist did not mention the disease, but noted that 'The Small Pox was very fatall to some. Mr. Vivian lost all his children, being four sons.'[2]

It is possible, of course, that an improved standard of life diminished mortality amongst the general population, but such an explanation does not fit in with the chronology of population growth and *per capita* incomes. It is probable that it was during the first half of the eighteenth century, rather than the second, that any rise in real incomes of the labouring classes took place,[3] yet population increased much more rapidly at the end of the century. I have already pointed out that growing real incomes could hardly explain the sharp fall in mortality amongst the gentry and aristocracy; and further, there was surprisingly little variation in adult male mortality between different occupational groups, due to income differentials, during the middle of the nineteenth century,[4] suggesting that income factors were not important in determining rates of mortality.

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The most recent comprehensive work on the history of Irish population during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries is that by Professor

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[1] *Surrey Archeological Collections*, XXVII, pp. 16–20.

[2] See R. Pickard, *Population and Epidemics of Exeter* (1947), pp. 65, 66.

[3] For example, see Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 91.

[4] See the *14th R.G. Report 1851*, pp. XVIII, XXII.

Connell. He concluded that the great acceleration in population growth at the end of the eighteenth century was due 'very likely to the increase of fertility that followed earlier marriage'.[1] Dr. M. Drake, however, has recently criticized this interpretation on the ground that the statistics of the 1830s do not, in fact, indicate a low age at marriage.[2] The following statistics appear to support this criticism:

Table 2. Proportion Unmarried of 100 of the Population of the Respective Ages (Ireland, 1841)[3]

		Under 17	17–25	26–35	36–45	46–55	53 +
Males	Rural	100	93	44	16	16	8
	Civic	100	87	36	17	12	10
Females	Rural	100	81	28	15	12	12
	Civic	100	79	33	20	15	15

The distribution of the unmarried amongst various age groups was very similar to that in England at about the same time;[4] if one allows for the overstatement of early marriages in the statistics for the 1830s (as outlined by Drake), it would appear that the mean age of marriage of spinsters and bachelors was nearly the same for both Ireland and England, i.e. about $24\frac{1}{2}$ for spinsters and $25\frac{1}{2}$ for bachelors.[5] This finding agrees with the fact that both the crude birth rate and age-specific birth rate were similar for the two countries for the period around 1840.[6] It might be argued, of course, that the relatively late age

[1] K. H. Connell, *The Population of Ireland, 1750–1845* (Oxford, 1950), p. 248.

[2] M. Drake, 'Marriage and Population Growth in Ireland, 1750–1845', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XVI (1963–4).

[3] Population Census Ireland 1841, *Parl. Pap. 1843/24*, pp. 41, 42. Indeed, Ireland appears to have had one of the highest mean ages at marriage and lowest marriage rates in Europe. The contradiction between the literary and statistical evidence was pointed out in *6th R.G. Report 1844*, pp. XXXIII, XXXIV.

[4] See Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, pp. 15, 16.

[5] For English ages at marriage during 1839–41 see the *Fourth Annual Report of the Registrar General 1842*, p. 10.

[6] The proportion of women between 15 and 44 as a percentage of the total female population and the crude birth-rate were about the same for both countries during this period. See Connell, *op. cit.*, pp. 30, 37.

of marriage in Ireland was not typical of the period before 1841. Drake has examined the statistics for the 1830s and has concluded that a 'trend towards later marriage which they depict probably did not occur'.[1] Possibly at an even earlier period marriage took place at a lower age, but then the age at marriage would be *rising* throughout the early nineteenth century when population was increasing very rapidly. The only evidence for early marriage is literary rather than statistical, but if the evidence for the 1830s is typical we are unable to rely upon the estimates of casual observers. For example, Connell has written that 'according to an official summary of the immense mass of evidence presented to the Poor Inquiry Commission of 1836, men in Galway usually married when they were between 14 and 21; in Leitrim between 16 and 22; in Mayo and Sligo usually under 20, and in King's County between 17 and 20',[2] yet according to the 1841 Irish Census there were *only fifty-three* married men under the age of 17 in the whole of Ireland.[3] It is probable that the informants of the Commission had a vested interest in castigating the moral 'laxity' of agricultural labourers and small cultivators: they had to find an explanation for the poverty of the majority of the population, and what more convenient explanation than the Malthusian one?

Drake has argued that there are alternative explanations for the rapid expansion of the Irish population: (1) 'that a highly nutritious and regular diet of potatoes so improved the health of Irish women that their fecundity increased markedly';[4] and (2) 'that the universal acceptance of the potato as the staple food would lead to a once-and-for-all drop in the general level of mortality'.[5] There are two major difficulties with this interpretation: first that population increased rapidly only after 1772, whereas potatoes had been used widely in Ireland since at least the beginning of the eighteenth century; and second, that earlier diets were probably much more nutritious than the exclusive reliance on potatoes at a later date. Petty wrote in about 1671–2 that 'The Diet of these people [the Irish] is Milk, sweet and sower, thick and thin, which is also their Drink in Summertime, in Winter, Small-Beer or Water. . . . Their Food is Bread or Cakes, whereof a Penny serves a Week for each; Potatoes from August till May, Mussels, Cockles and Oysters, near the Sea; Eggs and Butter, made very rancid, by keeping in Bags. As for Flesh . . . tis easier for them to have a Hen or Rabbit, than a piece of Beef of equal substance'.[1] Several contemporaries thought that the Irish poor could no longer afford milk and other 'extras' during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[2] It seems inconceivable that the slightly more luxurious earlier diet was less nutritious than potatoes by themselves. And if potatoes were associated with higher fecundity, why were not Irish women more fertile than English women?

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[1] Drake, *loc. cit.*, p. 311.

[2] K. H. Connell, 'Peasant Marriage in Ireland: its Structure and Development since the Famine', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., XIV (1961–2), p. 520.

[3] Population Census Ireland 1841, *Parl. Pap. 1843/24*, p. 439. There were only 480 married females under the age of 17.

[4] Drake, *loc. cit.*, p. 311.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 312.

The death rate in Ireland appears to have been lower during the 1830s than it was in England. According to the retrospective statistics collected for the Irish census of 1841, the crude death rate was 16.8 per 1,000 for the years 1836–40,[3] whereas in England and Wales for the period 1838–41 it was 22.2 per 1,000.[4] That this finding is not an artefact of the method of collecting statistics or due to differences in the age composition of the two populations is demonstrated by comparing age-specific death rates for the year 1840/41.[5] Below the age of about 35 the Irish mortality rates were all lower than the English, but the great disparity occurred amongst young children—Ireland had a mortality rate of about 40 deaths per 1,000 children living under the age of five, whereas the equivalent English rate was about 67 per 1,000.[6] The explanation of this marked difference in child-mortality rates is probably that a much higher proportion of the Irish population lived in rural areas. Within Ireland, the urban civic districts had a child-mortality rate (about 78 per 1,000) well over twice that in the rural districts (about 35 per 1,000). The conclusion to be drawn from these comparisons is that like the age at marriage, and the age-specific birth and marriage rates, the age-specific death rate in Ireland was similar in about 1841 to that in England and Wales when allowance is made for distribution effects of population in urban and rural areas. This would imply that demographic factors were independent of economic differences, a conclusion similar to that reached from a study of the age at marriage and age-specific birth and marriage rates within England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

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[1] Other writers during the late seventeenth century emphasize potatoes and milk in the diets of the Irish poor. See G. O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland in the 17th Century* (Dublin, 1919), pp. 137–42.

[2] G. O'Brien, *The Econ. Hist. of Ireland from the Union to the Famine* (1921), p. 21.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 189.

[4] *Fifth Annual Report of the Registrar General 1843*, p. 379.

[5] As the number of deaths in 1840 was ascertained from a house to house survey made in the following year (1841), the figures presumably are reliable, especially for young children's deaths.

[6] For the Irish age-specific mortality rates see Connell, *Population of Ireland*, p. 193; for English mortality rates for roughly similar age groups, see Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, pp. 38, 40; for the exact figures under the age of 5, *Fourth Annual Report of the Registrar General 1842*, p. 128.

If the increase in Irish population is not to be explained in terms of a high birth rate associated with a low age at marriage, but in terms of a low death rate, what possible cause or series of causes could explain any *fall* in the death rate during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries? We have already rejected the hypothesis that there was an improvement in the Irish diet during the eighteenth century. Professor Connell, after reviewing possible causes for a reduction in mortality, concluded that his 'examination of the social habits and the housing of the Irish, the dissemination of hospitals and dispensaries, the spread of vaccination and the incidence of fever does not support the proposition that in Ireland, as is said to have been the case in England, greater cleanliness and medical advances led to a substantial lowering of mortality'.[1] Professor Connell also reviewed the history of smallpox and inoculation, but unfortunately did not treat the subject at length; here it is only possible to elucidate some hypotheses and briefly illustrate them with relevant statistics.

Smallpox appears to have been present in Ireland at least from the Middle Ages onwards and had become endemic before the eighteenth century.[2] The disease seems to have occurred almost every year in Dublin during the period 1661–1746, when bills of mortality were kept.[3] According to statistics derived from these bills, smallpox accounted for about 20 per cent of the total deaths during the two periods 1661–90 and 1715–46.[4] Smallpox deaths 'accounted' for about 33 per cent of all children born during 1715–46, according to the Dublin bills of mortality. No other statistics of smallpox mortality are available for Ireland before the 1830s. However, several observers described smallpox epidemics during one period of the eighteenth century. Dr. James Sims recounted the smallpox epidemic of 1766–7, writing that smallpox outbreaks 'with unheard of havock, desolated the close of this year [1766], and the succeeding spring of 1767. They had appeared above a year before along the eastern coast of the kingdom, and proceeded slowly westward with so even a pace, that a curious person might with ease have computed the rate of their progress. . . . As they had not visited the country for some years, numerous subjects were grown up for them to exercise their fury upon, and many blooming infants were just opening to the sun, in vain, since they were so soon to be cropt by this unfeeling spoiler. Of thousands who caught the infection in this [Tyrone] and the neighbouring counties, scarcely one-half escaped, and even of these, some with the loss of one or both eyes, and several with faces so altered, as to be known with difficulty by their most intimate acquaintances'.[1] A later epidemic in 1770 was less mortal but this was attributed to 'the want of subjects for them to exercise their fury upon, the preceding disorder having left few who had not undergone the malady, than to any abatement in their malignancy'.[2] These descriptions of smallpox epidemics in the countryside are identical with those to be found in England before the advent of inoculation, and smallpox was always more virulent in isolated country areas owing to a lack of a pool of antibodies.[3]

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[1] Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

[2] As Rogers wrote in 1743: 'though of foreign Growth, and by Transplantation brought in amongst us, it is now become a Weed of our own Soil, and a Native of our Country'. Joseph Rogers, *Essay on Epidemic Diseases* (Dublin, 1734), p. 82.

[3] For a description of the content of the bills and relevant statistics, see J. Fleetwood, *History of Medicine in Ireland* (Dublin 1951), p. 65, and Dr. J. Rutty, *A Chronological History . . . of the Prevailing Diseases in Dublin* (Dublin, 1770).

[4] The actual figures are as follows: Dublin, 1661–90: smallpox deaths (annual average)—472, total deaths (annual average)—2,236. 1715–46 (excluding 1739): smallpox deaths—13,759, total deaths—74,585; total births—42,566.

3

Inoculation was introduced into Ireland in 1725 and spread very slowly amongst the general population, although unfortunately little is known of the exact chronology. The watershed of the practice of inoculation in Ireland, like that in England, was probably the perfection of a safe technique by the Suttons during the 1760s. The Suttons appointed several partners in Ireland: 'Messrs. Houlton, Blake and Sparrow in Dublin; John Hailey, M.D. in Cork; John Morgan, M.D. in Straborne, Tyrone; and Messrs. Vachell, Ward, Shields & Arnold soon [1768] to be appointed to particular districts in Ireland'.[4] This development appears to have marked the beginning of popular inoculation in Ireland. In 1769 'a special infirmary was set apart in the Foundling Hospital of Dublin, for Experimenting with inoculation upon the inmates'.[1] In April 1777 'agreeable to the humane resolutions of the King's County Infirmary, 461 persons were, in the course of last month, inoculated'.[2] The difficulty of tracing the history of inoculation in Ireland is that most of it was carried out by 'individuals [who] proceed from village to village several times during the year for the purpose of inoculating the infantile population',[3] a practice, of course, made necessary because there were at this time so few doctors in Ireland. Inoculation does not appear to have been used much during the 1766 epidemic as described by Sims, although he refers to the existence of 'inoculators' at that time.[4] Houlton observed in 1768 that several itinerant inoculators were claiming that they practised the safe Suttonian technique,[5] and as I have said this was probably the beginning of popular inoculation in Ireland.

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[1] J. Sims, *Observations on Epidemic Disorders* (1773), pp. 36–38.

[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 134–5.

[3] See my paper in *Econ. Hist. Rev.*

[4] R. Houlton, *Indisputable Facts Relative To The Suttonian Art of Inoculation* (Dublin, 1768), p. 10.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century inoculation was practised almost universally. The Dublin College of Physicians, when asked in 1807 their opinion of vaccination, replied that 'Variolous Inoculation had been long, almost exclusively in the hands of a particular branch of the profession ("irregular practitioners") . . . being the usual medical attendants in families, and especially employed in the diseases of children. . . . Smallpox is rendered a much less formidable disease in Ireland by the frequency of inoculation for it . . . hence parents, not unnaturally, objected to the introduction of a new disease (vaccination) rather than not recur to that with the mildness and safety of which they are well acquainted.'[6] According to the Rev. H. Townsend, writing in 1810, the increase in population was partly due to 'the universal custom of inoculating children for the smallpox, a disorder, which was once a little less injurious in its ravages than the plague'.[7] The activities of the itinerant inoculators were noted in Derry in 1812,[8] and in Co. Water-

[1] Population Census 1851, *Parl. Pap. 1856/29*, p. 146.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 422.

[3] Population Census Ireland 1841, *Parl. Pap. 1843/24*, p. XII.

[4] Sims, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

[5] Houlton, *op. cit.*, p. 25. 'Some, I am informed since my arrival in Ireland, are now travelling over several parts of the kingdom. . . .'

[6] *Report of the Royal College of Physicians of London on Vaccination* (1807).

[7] Rev. H. Townsend, *Statistical Survey of the County of Cork* (Dublin, 1810), p. 90.

[8] W. S. Mason, *Statistical Account, a Parochial Survey of Ireland*, I (Dublin 1814), p. 313.

ford, Cork, Kerry, and Clare at later dates.[1] Sir William Wilde noticed the activities of the inoculators as late as 1851.[2]

Connell accepts that inoculation was practised very extensively, but also accepts the traditional belief that inoculation spread smallpox to those who were not protected by it. I have dealt with this problem at some length elsewhere,[3] and it can be only briefly discussed here within the context of Irish experience. According to Sir William Wilde, vaccination was practised in Irish towns much more than in country areas, owing mainly to the preference for inoculation amongst the peasants.[4] Yet smallpox mortality was much less in the country areas than in the towns:[5]

Table 3. Irish Smallpox Mortality in Town and Country.

	Population (1841)	Smallpox deaths (1831–40)	Annual average smallpox deaths per million living
Civic districts	1,135,465	12,418	1,093
Rural districts	7,039,659	45,459	647

This difference cannot be explained by the different age structures of the town and countryside population—they were approximately similar—or by the greater extent of smallpox in the towns: everywhere in Ireland during the 1830s smallpox was a young child's disease, meaning that most children caught it (unless they were inoculated or vaccinated) by their fifth birthday.[6] In such a situation inoculation could not conceivably spread smallpox, as it was already a universal disease. Smallpox mortality was higher in urban areas because there was less inoculation and vaccination practised there; the rural areas had lower smallpox mortality rates because of the protection given by inoculation. The total smallpox mortality rate of Ireland was about 710 annual deaths per million living. Although this figure may appear at first sight to be high, it is, in fact, remarkably low if compared with earlier mortality rates. In Dublin during 1661–90, for instance, the smallpox mortality rate had been about 8,600 per million.[1] Expressed as a proportion of total deaths, smallpox had accounted for about 20 per cent of deaths in the 1661–1745 period in Dublin, whereas in that city during 1831–40 it accounted for under 3 per cent of them.[2] The rate of 710 per million is also low by what might be expected if neither inoculation nor vaccination had been utilized on a wide scale. The case fatality rate of natural smallpox amongst infants was about forty deaths per 100 cases during the 1830s;[3] had all children under the age of 5 caught smallpox, the smallpox mortality rate would have been 400,000 deaths per 1,000,000 living rather than the 39,300 per 1,000,000 which was the actual rate for children under 5,[4] i.e. it would have been about ten times the actual rate.

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[1] *First Report of the General Board of Health in the City of Dublin*, pp. 94–97.

[2] Population Census Ireland 1851, *Parl. Pap. 1856/29*, p. 422.

[3] See the paper already cited.

[4] *The Epidemiological Society Report, 1852–53*, p. 29.

[5] *Royal Commission on Vaccination*, 1st Report (1889).

[6] 49,000 of the 58,000 total smallpox deaths during 1831–40 were of children under 5 years of age.

The point of these hypothetical comparisons is to indicate the scale of saving of life by inoculation and vaccination. Although it is impossible to trace the exact decline of smallpox during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there being no statistical information available for Ireland during this period, literary sources as already indicated suggest a rapid decline before the end of the eighteenth century. Sir William Wilde in his survey of smallpox epidemics mentions none after 1776, except for mild outbreaks in 1827 and afterwards.[5] Accepting, therefore, the effectiveness of inoculation, it may be concluded that the gradual disappearance of smallpox could account for the whole of the increase in population after about 1770.[6] The chronology of inoculation, it should be noticed, fits in very well with the great acceleration in population growth from about 1771 onwards as outlined by Professor Connell.[1]

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[1] This is using Petty's population figure of 55,000 for Dublin; undoubtedly this is an underestimate, but so many deaths were not registered that the two underestimations appear to cancel each other out, i.e. the overall crude death-rate using Petty's population figure is about 40 per 1,000, a not unreasonable figure for a city the size of Dublin during this period.

[2] 'Report . . . by the . . . Vaccination Committee 1853', *Parl. Pap. 1852–53/101*, p. 80. None of the smallpox mortality statistics in this essay ought to be taken literally, as there were several reasons why smallpox deaths were under-registered.

[3] See the *Royal Commission on Vaccination*, 1st Report (1889), pp. 74, 215; *ibid.*, 6th Report, pp. 717–20; E. G. Edwards, *A Concise History of Smallpox and Vaccination* (1902), p. 55.

[4] Connell, *The Population of Ireland*, p. 219.

[5] Population Census Ireland 1851, *Parl. Pap. 1856/29*, p. 422.

[6] Certainly if the 1766–7 epidemic was typical of pre-inoculation experience, the disappearance of smallpox in Ireland could explain any increase in population. Generally, smallpox mortality appears to have been heavier in Ireland than in England; nevertheless population expansion in Ireland before 1770 was probably due to earlier long-term changes such as the disappearance of the plague. In this sense, the gradual elimination of smallpox would only explain the great acceleration of Irish population after 1770.

4

I have suggested that the population growth in both England and Ireland during the latter half of the eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries can be explained as a result of the gradual elimination of smallpox, and therefore may be considered independent of contemporary economic changes. But since it appears that the demographic experience of the two countries was very similar, why was it that economic effects were so different? The answer to this question is obviously complex, and involves consideration of a wide range of economic, social, and political factors; in my few remaining pages only some points of particular relevance can be suggested.

The cloth industry was England's chief commercial manufacture during the eighteenth century, but according to recent estimates it only accounted for about 5 per cent of the total national income,[2] and its domestic market appears to have hardly changed between 1695 and 1772.[3] As most of the expansion in the cloth industry before 1772 can be explained as a consequence of increasing exports, we must ask how much other economic growth during this period was due to domestic expansion. Deane and Cole have argued that a *general* economic expansion took place from the 1740s onwards. This conclusion is based, however, on an index of real output which is virtually an index of estimated population growth, as agriculture (43 %) and rent and services (20 %) are both based on questionable estimates of the size of population. An analysis of the production series that are available throws considerable doubt on the 1740s as a turning-point. As one writer has pointed out: 'Of the dozen or so commodities for which output figures are available there are several in which the levels reached in 1741–5 and 1746–50 were lower than those achieved earlier in the century. This is true of

[1] See Connell, *The Population of Ireland*, p. 25.

[2] P. Deane 'The Output of the British Woollen Industry in the Eighteenth Century', *Journal of Economic History*, XVII (1957), p. 221.

[3] According to Deane's estimate, domestic consumption of manufactured cloth was about £3 million in 1695. If one accepts the proportion of Yorkshire woollens and worsteds exported in 1772 as being typical of the country as a whole (at this time Yorkshire output accounted for about 60 per cent of the total), domestic consumption of manufactured woollen cloth was also about £3 million in 1772. See Deane, *op. cit.*, pp. 220, 221.

strong beer, starch, hides and skins, coal imports, raw silk and thrown silk. Indeed, for some of these commodities the 1740s is a low point. In other commodities, such as printed goods and soap, the acceleration of output was clearly later in the century.'[1] This criticism appears valid, since, if one takes Deane and Cole's own home industries index (beer, leather, candles, and soap), the uninterrupted and main increase in production certainly occurs after 1770.[2] One hypothesis which would explain differences in the chronology of increased consumption of different commodities is that the consumption of quality goods increased much sooner and in greater quantities than did that of cheaper goods. The output of tallow candles, used by poorer people, doubled between 1715 and the end of the century, whereas that of wax candles, used by the wealthier classes, increased nearly tenfold.[3] The production of high-quality white glass nearly quadrupled between 1747 and 1801, whereas that of common bottles only began to increase during the 1790s.[4] The best comparison between the output of quality and cheap

Table 4. Output of Quality and Cheap Goods 1695–1804.

	Imports of silk (1695–1704 = 100)	Strong beer production (1695–1704 = 100)
1695–1704	100	100
1705–14	92	99
1715–24	110	112
1725–34	130	104
1735–44	107	102
1745–54	116	108
1755–64	153	113
1765–74	182	112
1775–84	203	123
1785–94	225	136
1795–1804	217	163

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[1] D. Whitehead, 'History to Scale? The British Economy in The Eighteenth Century', *Business Archives and History*, IV, No. 1 (Feb. 1964), p. 83.

[2] The index numbers were as follows (beginning at 1700 and continuing at every tenth year until 1800): 100, 98, 108, 105, 105, 107, 114, 114, 123, 137, 152. Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

[3] T. S. Ashton, *An Economic History of England: The Eighteenth Century* (1955), p. 60.

[4] Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

goods is between silk and beer.[1] The consumption of silk increased rapidly after 1755, whereas that of beer only really began to increase after 1775.

It may be suggested that the earlier expansion of the market for quality products was a result of the rapidly increasing population of the aristocracy, gentry, and other wealthy groups. During the eighteenth century about a quarter of the national income went to 3½ per cent of all families, i.e. the aristocracy, gentry, and merchant class.[2] Due to decreased mortality their numbers probably quadrupled between 1750 and 1850,[3] and they were the social classes most able to translate their increased needs into effective demand. This could have occurred in several ways: by a switch from savings to consumption; by increased borrowing, including mortgaging of land; improvements of their assets, through the enclosure of land and a more intensive use of their capital in business;[4] and by a general exploitation of patronage through increased participation in Parliament, particularly with reference to finding places in the very rapidly expanding army.[5] The main problem would have been to find positions for their now surviving younger sons and provide their daughters with portions; possibly this was one of the reasons for the frequent failure of many of the poorer gentry and yeomanry during this period.

If the earlier analysis of the causes of the population increase is correct, mortality did not fall significantly amongst the poorer classes until after 1765, and this would explain why the consumption of cheaper commodities did not rise until after this date. It would appear that the domestic consumption of woollen cloth increased rapidly after about 1772: after this date the total output of woollen cloth rose, while the proportion exported fell from about 70 per cent in 1772 to 35 per cent in 1805, and 20 per cent after the 1820s.[1] Beginning probably during the 1770s, there was a considerable expansion of the home market for cheap woollens and cottons, due almost certainly to an increase in population rather than a growth in *per capita* incomes. It is not necessary to describe the effects of the great upsurge in population after 1770 which affected every branch of economic and social life—the growth of canals, the improvement of roads, enclosure of land, development of the factory system—in short, the Industrial Revolution. Although increasing exports and the raised demand of the wealthy led to a growth of production, these were not the foundation of the change.[2] They helped to maintain the real incomes of the mass of the population, and therefore helped to translate increased needs (from an enlarged population) into effective demand, which raised prices and stimulated economic growth.[3] Only a radical expansion of mass markets could provide the sufficient condition necessary for the fundamental transformation of the economy, i.e. the growth of the new factory capitalism. It is no accident that this capitalism did emerge ultimately in Lancashire, after its earlier forms had developed elsewhere. Lancashire had been the centre of production of the very cheapest cloth in the early eighteenth century, and untrammelled by traditional constraints it was the natural place for the emergence of the factory system producing for a mass market.

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[1] Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 51. The index figures are only approximations.

[2] P. Mathias, 'The Social Structure in the Eighteenth Century: a Calculation by Joseph Massie', *Econ. Hist. Rev.*, 2nd ser., X (1957–8), pp. 42–45.

[3] See T. H. Hollingsworth, 'A Demographic Study of the British Ducal Families', *Population Studies*, XI (1957).

[4] Both the number of patents taken out and the number of bankruptcies increased sharply from the 1760s onwards: Mitchell and Deane, *op. cit.*, p. 268; Ashton, *op. cit.*, p. 254. The scale of possible profit from enclosures is indicated by the estimate of Gregory King in 1685 that only about half of the total land surface of England was cultivated, of which three-fifths was cultivated under the common-field system. See J. L. and B. Hammond, *The Village Labourer* (1919), p. 26 n. 1.

[5] According to an unpublished analysis of mine, the proportion of the old aristocracy in the House of Commons rose significantly during the eighteenth century, and younger sons of the aristocracy increased their numbers in the Church, Navy, and 'Civil Service', as well as in the Army. The colonial Army and mercantile 'administration' provided outlets particularly for younger sons of the gentry.

5

In Ireland the result of the population explosion was the growth of a subsistence economy rather than an industrial revolution. Although the Irish census of 1841 returned about 30 per cent of the total occupied population as employed in industry, two-thirds of these were women, most of whom worked at home in domestic industry, providing goods for local consumption.[4] The only province with a sizeable male population employed in industry was Ulster, the centre of the linen manufacture.[1] This industry had been encouraged since the beginning of the eighteenth century as a compensation for the destruction of the Irish woollen industry in 1699.[2] The export of linen cloth and yarn trebled between 1718–47 and 1748–77, about 90 per cent of it finding its way into the English market.[3] In 1771 it was estimated that the manufacture of linen was worth £2,200,106, 70 per cent of the output being exported.[4] Linen was estimated to be worth about half the total value of all exports during 1771–7,[5] but its export importance declined during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, while home consumption appears to have expanded sharply during the same period.[6] Cotton, however, began to displace linen, for, as one observer noted in 1840, 'men cannot live for what they get for [linen] weaving now. There is a great difference in respect of the appearance of weavers who come to market now and formerly; they are not so well dressed, nor near so comfortable looking: the fine sturdy young men, who once came to the market, have now gone out of the trade, and many have emigrated to America. I remember when it was the best trade in Ireland; now it has gone to nothing. The cotton trade has ruined the linen; formerly everybody wore linen, and now everybody wears cotton'.[7] The change was probably due to the abandonment of protection of Irish industry in 1825, as even the domestic cotton industry began to wilt under the competition from England.[8] The first cotton mill driven by water power in Ireland was established near Belfast in 1784;[9] by the 1830s and 1840s 'the deserted factory with its silent water wheel was already a familiar aspect of the Irish scene'.[10] One of the main reasons for the eclipse of Irish industry was the lack of coal, although presumably the cheapness of labour might have more than offset the cost of importing coal from England.

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[1] Although this was partly due to the substitution of cottons for woollens in the export market, only about 30 per cent of all cottons were exported during the second half of the eighteenth century. See Deane and Cole, *op. cit.*, pp. 185, 196.

[2] The growth in the export market partly depended upon emigration, and thus on population increase at home; inoculation was also widely used in America and the West Indies, and so was contributory to population growth in these markets.

[3] According to figures computed by Arthur Young, the price of wheat began to rise in about 1764; the price of wheat (statute measure) at the Windsor Market was as follows: 1714–38—£1. 15*s*. 5*d*. per qtr.; 1739–63—£1. 14*s*. 2*d*.; 1764–88—£2. 6*s*. 6*d*. See A. Young, *Annals of Agriculture*, XIV (1790), pp. 228–30.

[4] T. W. Freeman, *Pre-Famine Ireland* (Manchester, 1957), pp. 76–77.

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] Although the manufacture of woollen cloth was very small in Ireland at the end of the seventeenth century, it was growing very rapidly during the last decade. It was supressed at the instigation of English clothiers, who were afraid it might eventually provide overwhelming competition. See G. O'Brien, *The Economic History of Ireland in the 17th Century* (Dublin, 1919), pp. 227–9.

[3] A. W. Hutton, *Young's Tour of Ireland*, II (1892), pp. 200, 202.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 201.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 255.

[6] The following are contemporary estimates: linen manufacture 1771: exports —£1,541,200; home consumption—£658,906; value of linen manufacture 1817 —£3,151,752; exports of linen 1822—£861,944. See Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 201, and O'Brien, *op. cit.* (1921), p. 302.

[7] Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

[8] See O'Brien, *Economic History of Ireland* . . . (1921), p. 311.

[9] Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

Perhaps the failure of industry in Ireland was rooted in the nature of the country's social structure. Arthur Young had noted in 1779 that the 'only considerable manufacture in Ireland, which carries in all its parts the appearance of industry, is the linen; and it ought never to be forgotten that this is solely confined to the Protestant parts of the kingdom; yet we may see from the example of France and other countries that there is nothing in the Roman Catholic religion itself that is incompatible with manufacturing industry. The poor Catholics in the south of Ireland spin wool very generally, but the purchasers of their labour, and the whole worsted trade, is in the hands of the Quakers of Clonmell, Carrick, Bandon, etc. The fact is, the professors of that religion are under such discouragements that they cannot engage in any trade which requires both industry and capital. If they succeed and make a fortune, what are they to do with it? They can neither buy land, nor take a mortgage, nor even fine down the rent of a lease. Where is there a people in the world to be found industrious under such a circumstance?'[1]

Young was undoubtedly correct in emphasizing the lack of financial incentives for Catholics to engage in industry, and another factor probably as important was their lack of capital. Very little land was owned by Catholics, and as early as the late seventeenth century most of the Irish population were peasants relying on subsistence farming. According to one observer writing in 1691, 'their food is mostly milk and potatoes, their cloathing coarse bandrel cloth and linen, both of their own make; a pot of gruel; a griddle whereon to bake their bread, a little salt, snuff, and iron for their ploughs being almost all they troubled their shopkeeper or merchant for. A little hut or cabin to live in is all that the poverty of this sort hope or have ambition for'.[2] Petty had estimated that out of a total of 200,000 houses, 160,000 were without any chimney, suggesting that they 'live in a brutish nasty condition as in cabins with neither chimney, door, stair nor window'.[3] With this degree of poverty it must have been impossible for Catholic peasants to acquire capital sufficient to establish manufacturing industry, quite apart from the lack of a home market suitable for the absorption of such manufactures. Any capital available was owned by the Protestant landlords, many of whom were absentees; and as the population grew it became increasingly lucrative for them to invest their money in land, from which it was possible to obtain very high rents.[1] The derivation of these rents was described by Arthur Young: 'The poverty, common among the small occupying tenantry, may be pretty well ascertained from their general conduct in hiring a farm . . . they provide labour, which in England is so considerable an article by assigning portions of land to cottars for their potatoe gardens, and keeping one or two cows for each of them, and by means of living themselves in the very poorest manner, and converting every pig, fowl, and even eggs into cash, they will make up their rent . . .'[2]

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[1] Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

[2] O'Brien, *op. cit.* (1919), p. 141.

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 137–8.

In 1841 Ireland had a subsistence economy based on small peasant cultivation, widely scattered throughout the whole country: only about 20 per cent of the population lived in villages and towns, the rest in isolated cabins.[3] Pressure of population drove cultivation of potatoes 'towards the summits of the hills'[4] and meant that 'every possible spot of land is laboured'.[5] Subdivision of land and an almost exclusive potato diet enabled population to grow, inasmuch as the survivors of diminished mortality did not starve—until the subsistence economy collapsed and there occurred the great famine. The causes and consequences can best be seen in the following table:[6]

Table 5. Size of Land Holdings in Ireland, 1841 and 1851.

Size of holdings	Number of holdings	
	1841	1851
Not exceeding 1 acre	134,314	37,728
Exceeding 1 but not exceeding 5 acres	310,436	88,083
Exceeding 5 but not exceeding 15 acres	252,799	191,854
Exceeding 15 but not exceeding 30 acres	79,342	141,311
Exceeding 30 acres	48,625	149,090

The very small peasants and casual labourers were virtually eliminated within a decade: these were the inhabitants of the 'growth class' housing—one-room cabins—which declined in number by 355,689 between 1841 and 1851, a decline of about 70 per cent.[1] The majority of the people leaving these cabins probably emigrated, although their reliance on potato subsistence meant that many of them starved to death or died from fevers associated with the famine.

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[1] See O'Brien (1921), pp. 12, 89, 97, 98.
[2] Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 31, 32.
[3] Freeman, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
[4] Connell, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
[5] *Ibid.*, p. 118.
[6] O'Brien, *op. cit.* (1921), p. 59.

6

Unable to industrialize, and with a rapidly expanding population increasingly dependent on the potato, famine in Ireland was inevitable. In England, on the other hand, all the conditions for industrial growth had been present before the population explosion: a relatively high standard of living and a social structure encouraging enterprise and providing a potential mass market; a thriving textiles industry; the existence of provincial capital markets and a great and growing commercial centre in London; relative political stability; a progressive agriculture; sufficient technical innovation; abundant market outlets and sources of supply in overseas markets—to mention only the best known of the much-discussed influences on growth. Although in both countries population increased rapidly through the use of inoculation against smallpox, England was fortunate in being able to industralize and thus avoid the mass starvation that was the disastrous fate of Ireland.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Index

Agriculture, Board of, 9, 27, 166
Allotments,
  definition of, 166
  synonyms for, 166
  sizes of, 176–8, 175
  rules for, 170
  distribution of, 163 (map), 171–2
  Committee on (1843), 170n., 171, 181
  pamphlets advocating, 174–5
  opposition from farmers, 178
  Parliamentary action on, 178ff.
Althorp, Lord, 179
Ancaster, Duke of, 166
Andrews, Robert, 15
Archer estates, 22
Arkwright family, 53–54, 232
  Sir Richard (1732–92), 51–53, 248
Richard, jun, (1755–1843), 50ff.; buys Hampton Court estate, 54ff.
  John, 53, 60, 61, 63–66
  Robert, 53, 64n.
  Charles, 54, 64
  Rev. Joseph, 53, 64
Audley End estate, 6, 8, 12, 16

Bailiffs, 20–21
Bakewell, Robert, 69
Bankers, 25, 45–46
Banks, Sir Joseph, 19
Barton, Henry, 6
Beard, J. R., 90
Bedford, Duke of, 10, 18
Beech, Richard, 70
Bentham, J., 128, 130
Berington family, 60, 63–64
  Thomas, 61, 66
Bernard, Sir Thomas, 167
Best family, 5
Bill family, 12
Birth rate, 190, 200, 254, 261
'Black Ox' Bank, 45
Blackner, John, 139n., 142, 143
Boulton, Matthew, 69, 232
Bourne, Sturges, 179
Bouverie, Sir Jacob, 6, 7, 24, 26
Bowley, A. L., 33
Brandreth, Jeremiah, 142
Briggs, Asa, 161
Brownlee, John, 189, 191, 192, 195, 249
Buckfastleigh, 202–4
Byng, John (Viscount Torrington), 52

Calvinist economic dogma, 86ff.
Canal boom (1790–2), 29, 32
  network, 231–2, 245
  Grand Trunk, 248
Carlyle, T., 133
Carrington, Lord, 166, 178
Chadwick, Sir Edwin, 128, 177
  a Poor Law Commissioner, 177, 180–1
Chances of Bromsgrove, 232n.
Chandos, Duke of, 7, 10, 14, 23–24
Chapman, Nathaniel, 6
Chartists, 154–5
Chrisom children, 198, 200
Clark, Colin, 249–51
Clark, G. N., 48
Cloth industry, 274, 276–8
Coalbrookdale bridge, 248
Cobbett, William, 68, 133, 156
Cohen, Morris R., 104
Coke estate, 18
Colquhoun, Patrick, 40
Combination Laws, repeal of, 148
Connell, K. H., 266, 269
Contraception, 201, 253–4
Cookson family, 69

Crawshay, William, 53, 232
Cromford, 51ff., 248
Cromp, Thomas, 14, 16–18, 21–22
Crompton family, 53, 65
Crowley, Ambrose, 69
  John, 69
Crown Lands Allotment Act (1831), 179
Cuthbert family, 69

Darby family, 69
Davies, Rev. David, 172–3, 257, 258n.
Davis, Thomas, 27
Death rate, 192, 195ff., 261–3
  causes affecting, 252, 263
  Irish, 268ff.
Deering, Charles, 264
De Quincey, 108, 116, 122, 123
Devonshire, Duke of, 10, 52, 60
  Georgiana, Duchess of, 52–53
Disraeli, Benjamin, 48
Doherty, John, 131
Drake family, 9
  Sir William, 6
Drake, M., 266–7
Dunstall (Staffs.), 54, 64

Eaton, Rev. Samuel, 91
Eden, Sir F. M., 246 and n., 258
Enclosures, 58, 164, 245
  Act (1801), 29
  Acts (1793–1815), 30–31
Epidemics, 252
Essex, Earl of, 54ff.
Evangelical Revival, 94, 95
Exports, 221ff.

Farm methods improved, 35–36, 69–70
Felkin, William, 133, 139, 153
Fielden family, 69
Fire insurance, 13
Foley family, 59
Framework Knitters, Company of, 145, 157
  Union Society of, 134, 136, 139
  misfortunes of, 146
Framework Knitters, History of (Henson), 156

Gace, Joseph, 21
Gast, John, 131
Glass trade, 234, 275
Grain prices, 241, 243
Greene, Isaac, 12
Griffith, Mr. (Chandos steward), 23
Griffith, Talbot, 192, 195, 262
Gross national product, 226ff.
Grosvenor estate, 15
Grundy, Mr. (preacher), 92
Gurney & Co. (bankers), 45

Habakkuk, H. J., 26, 46, 48n., 49n., 50n., 53n.
Hagen, E., 84–85, 233n.
Hampton Court estate, Leominster, 50ff.
  house, 60
Hardwicke estates, 6
Hartwell, R. M., 207, 236
Henson, Gravener, 82, 94, 131ff.
  education, 133
  probably jailed, 134
  connection alleged with Luddism, 137ff.
  his attitude to Luddism, 140
  his improvements in lace technique, 147
  seeks legal protection for workmen, 148
  acts as mediator, 149–50
  chairman of Nottingham Society of Inventors, 151
  fights French competition in lace trade, 152–4
  remains aloof from Chartists, 154, 159
  death, 156
Herring, Caleb, 156
Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property (1775), 9
Hobsbawn, E., 42, 159–60
Holkham, 18
Home market, ch. 9
  analysed, 210ff.
  organization of, 226ff.
  predominance of, 233
  as basis for exports, 234

Hosiery industry, 132, 140
  rift with knitters, 134
  separate wage claims by branches, 143
  bag hosiers, 141
Hoskyns, Chandos Wren, 64

Illegitimacy, 201
Incomes, household, 257–8
Inoculation, smallpox, 263–5, 270–3
Insurance Companies, 13
Inventions, 236–7
Ireland, grain from, 29
  economic change in, 265ff.
Irish labourers, 112, 114, 177
Iron production, 235–6
Isaac, Daniel, 83

Kay-Shuttleworth, Sir James, 95
Kenfig Castle, 10
Kent, Nathaniel, 9, 27, 60
King, Gregory, 196, 203, 213, 214, 230–1
Kingston, estate and Dukes of, 14, 16–18, 19, 21, 25
Knight family, 59

Labour, supply of, 15, 32–35
Labourers,
  habits of, 105–6
  teachability of, 107
  Irish, 112, 114, 177
  insecurity, 112–13
  industry and efficiency, 114
  wages, 115, 120ff.
  fertility, 116–17, 126
  diet, 124
  mobility, 125, 177, 256
Labourers' Friend Society, 167, 169, 172–6
Lace Industry, 132, 140
  rift with hosiers, 134
  introduction of machine lace, 146
Land stewards, 1ff.
  independent, 4
  part-time, 5
  recruitment of, 7
  lawyers as, 8
  recognized as professionals, 8
  training of, 8–9
  remuneration, 9–12, 17–18
  'arts of', 11
  functions and importance, 18ff.
  behaviour of Lord Essex's, 58–60
Laurence, Edward, 9, 27
Leases, printed, 5
Linen industry, 277–9
Llewellyn, Griffith, 10
Loans, agricultural, 45, 60, 61, 66
Luddites, 131, 135–6, 138–9
  based in country districts, 141
  their ultimate aim, 144–5
Lunar Society, Birmingham, 93

McCulloch, J. R., 102–3, 105ff.
  on distinction of classes, 106–7
  on incentives to labour, 111–12, 127
  on peasant proprietors, 113
  on wages, 115, 122–3
  on mobility of labour, 125–6
Malmesbury, Lord, 179
Malthus, T. R., 102, 106, 118, 246, 249, 261
  on Peterloo, 109
  on wages, 115, 122
  on moral restraint, 116–17, 252–3
  on children's allowances, 119
  on population, 102, 122, 255
  his 'law', 106, 127, 164
  on allotments, 176–7
Mansel, Lord, 12
Marcet, Jane, 128
Marchant, Thomas, 11
Margam, estates, 10, 12
Mark Hall (Essex), 53, 64
Marriage, age of, 201ff., 253, 261–2, 266
  rate, 204, 271
Marshall, Alfred, 246
Marshall (of Leeds), 70
Marshall, T. H., 191, 204
Marshall, William, 9, 27
Martineau, Harriet, 128
Mechanics, Society of, 134, 138
Meikle, Andrew, 34
Methodist economic dogma, 80ff.
Mill Hill Chapel (Leeds), 93
Mill, John Stuart, 107–8, 111, 122

Mill, James, 108–110, 115, 118, 122–3
Monson, Lord, 17, 20
Moore, Peter, 148
Mortality rate, *see* Death rate
Myddleton estates, 7

Nailing industry, 235
Newcastle, Duke of, 24, 139
Norfolk, Duke of, 60
North, Dudley, 6, 7
Nottingham Artisans' Chamber of Commerce, 154

Oldknow, Samuel, 51–52, 53, 69, 85
Orange, James, 95
Owen, Robert, 133

Parish Registers, 187–8, 190, 193ff.
  adequacy of, 199
Parkes, Josiah, 70
Patents, 236–7, 248
  for farm implements, 34
Peel, Sir Robert, sen., 53, 69
Pendred, William, 87
Pennystone family, 8, 12, 16
Pentrich rising (1817), 139, 142
Peterloo, 108–9
Petty, Sir William, 267–8
Phillips, William, 12
Place, Francis, 95, 118, 139, 148, 151
Pleydell, Sir Mark Stuart, 5, 25
Pole, Sacheverell Chandos, 55–57
Pole, Thornton & Co. (bankers), 55
Pollard, Sidney, 67–68, 216n.
Poor Inquiry Commission (Ireland, 1836), 267
Poor Law Amendment Act (1834), 164, 181
Poor Law Report (1834), 180–1
Poor Laws, Committee on (1817), 178
Poor Relief Act (1831), 179
Popham, Alexander, 178
Population
  rate of growth, 187, 193–4, 249ff., ch. 10
  Irish, 265ff.
    and see Birth rate, Death rate, Marriage rate
Portsmouth, Lady, 16
Potatoes, 40–41, 47, 267–8, 280
Potteries, 231, 233–4
Pressnell, L. S., 45
Prices, movement of farm, 29–30, 42–44
  of food and home demand, 240ff.
Priestley, Joseph, 91–92, 98
Pryme, George, 180

Radcliffes of Hitchin, 48n.
Raikes, R., 96
Rational Dissenters, 91
  and see Unitarian
Receivers, 20–21
Rents, farm, 44, 64
Ricardo, David, 102–3, 118
  on Peterloo, 108–9
  on wages, 115–16, 122–4
Rickman, John, 188, 191, 249
Ridley family, 69
Roads, 232
Rural Rides, 68
Rutland, Duke of, 52, 60

Savile, Sir George, 8
Scarth, W. G., 82
Schumpeter, E. B., 224, 228
Sedgley (Staffs.) manorial court, 237
Select Vestries Act (1819), 179
Senior, Nassau W., 105–6, 117, 126, 212
  on labour unrest, 110
  on Irish labourers, 112, 114
  on insecurity, 113
  on productivity, 114, 116
  on wages, 115, 122
  on fertility, 119
  as a pioneer of social reform, 128
  a Poor Law Commissioner, 177, 180
Sherer, Rev. J. G., 174
Short, Thomas, 194ff., 261
Sims, Dr. James, 270
Sinclair, Sir John, 178
Smallpox, 261–5, 269ff.
Smith, Adam, 106, 230, 246
Smith, John (banker), 55ff.
Somerset, Duke of, 11

Speenhamland system, 32, 111, 242, 246, 253
Stewards, *see* Land Stewards
Stone, Thomas, 9, 27
Stoveld, William, 62, 63, 64n.
Strutt family, 53, 65, 69, 233
'Subsistence', 123
Sutton Scarsdale, 53, 64n., 65
Sutton, Charles, 143
Sutton, Sir Richard, 22
Suttons, the (inoculators), 263 and n., 270–1

Talbot family, 10
Tayler, J., 92
Ten Hour Movement, the, 90
Thompson, E. P., 100, 129n., 131ff.
Ticket Act (1845), 155
Torrens, Robert, 103, 116, 122, 126, 129
Townsend, Joseph, 162
Townsend, Rev. H., 271
Townshend, Lord, 245
Toynbee, Arnold, 100
Tractarian movement, 94
Transcendentalist movement, 94
Tull, J., 245
Turnpike Act (1772), 232

Under-stewards, 20–21
Unitarian economic dogma, 90ff.
Utilitarian theory, 105

Vaccination, 271–3
Vachell, Colonel, 16
Vernon, Edward (Admiral), 5
Vital index, 194

Wages,
  agricultural, 32–33, 239
  classical theory of, 120–1
  cash, 215
  real, 241–2, 256
Wakefield, Edward, 59, 62–63
Walker, Samuel, 85, 233
Walpole, Sir Robert, 24, 48
Waters, Jones & Co. (bankers), 45
Watt, James, 69, 248
Weather records, 244
Weber, M., his *Protestant Ethic*, 75ff.
Wedgwood, Josiah, 49, 233–4
Wesley, John, his economic teaching, 77–80
Weyland, John, 180
Whitbread, Samuel, 69
Wilberforce, William, 167
Wilde, Sir William, 272–3
Wilkins & Co. (bankers), 45
Wilkinson, John, 70, 233
Willersley Castle, 52–53, 67
Wilson, James, 128
Winchilsea, Earl of, 166
Wood, G. H., 33
Wood, William, 92

Young, Arthur, 7, 27, 166, 174, 176, 178, 214, 218, 219, 242, 277n., 279–80

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